



# Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



## Technical Review Form Page

Application # PA-5031

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]  
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]  
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### CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

#### **A. Successful State Systems**

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's--</p> <p>(a) Financial investment, from January 2007 to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;</p> <p>(b) Increasing, from January 2007 to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;</p> <p>(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and</p> <p>(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### **Comments on (A)(1)**

The State refers to an increase in funding since 2000 for Early Learning and Development Programs that result in \$1.3B being spent today. However, Table (A)(1)-4 indicates that State spending is considerably less and decreased approximately \$110M from 2010 to 2011. This is not consistent with a commitment to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. Although Table (A)(1)-5 does not provide a definite number of children served in 2010 and 2011, it does seem to indicate that the number of children served increased slightly over those two years which would result in a decrease in the dollar per child being spent to support Early Learning and Development Programs. The RTT-ELC definition of Low Income is up to 200% of the federal poverty line. In Table (A)(1)-2 the State identifies a special population of children in the State who are at or below 300% of the federal poverty line and identify 58.4% of children birth-5 as belonging to this category. The State includes children from this income range in the Pre-K Counts program and it is unclear if children from above 200% of the federal poverty line are reflected in the State's data tables. The State-funded preschool program only serves 11,359 children which is a very small portion of the total number of children in Early Learning and Development Programs and this is not expected to detract from serving children who are within the 0-200% of federal poverty range. However, this broader definition of "low income" makes it difficult to interpret the data in the tables and makes it unclear how many children are below the 200% identified in the grant request. The State demonstrated initiative and forethought when it began working on interagency collaboration in 2007 through legislation to establish the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). OCDEL creates policies and practices that govern Early Learning and Development in the State which in turn guide the development of practices in the State including the practices that make up the RTT-ELC application. OCDEL is able to use data provided by an early childhood data system, Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN). The Administration's foresight in creating an interagency body is a demonstration of the State's early and sustained dedication to early learning. OCDEL was instrumental in the development of the Early Learning and Development Standards in the state. The State administers nine Early Learning and Development Programs including a Head Start Supplemental Program, Pre-K Counts, Early Intervention, and others. All nine of these programs utilize the Standards to some degree thus creating alignment within the system. The State has

begun implementation of a Comprehensive Assessment System. Developmental screening, formative assessments, measures of environmental quality, and measures of adult-child interactions are in place at this time. The State's Early Learning Standards address health promotion in the domains of Physical-Health and Social-Emotional. Professional development for Early Learning and Development programs has been provided in the areas of nutrition and physical activity yet there is no indication of how the standards address health education for children in the areas of healthy eating, physical activity, or oral health. The State indicates these issues are woven into the standards does but does not provide evidence. Family engagement is included in the State's Early Learning and Development Standards. Having it in the standards communicates the value that the State places on family engagement to Early Childhood Educators. The State has also included family engagement guidelines in the TQRIS as well as in the expectations for Early Learning and Development Programs run by the State. The State has a detailed and effective system in place to support the development of Early Childhood Educators. First, the State has a Career Lattice that details education level and training with corresponding positions. The State goes on to support development by working with higher education to align two and four year degrees. Most importantly, the State makes funding available to support higher education and also has a support system in place call "Gate Opener Grants" which help eliminate barriers that educators may face as they work toward a degree. The State will begin piloting a Kindergarten Entry Assessment in 2011-2012. The Kindergarten Inventory Framework will address all five Domains of School Readiness but is currently still in the pilot stage. The State does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. A pilot has been started but no significant strides have been made toward wider implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment at this time. The State has made progress in establishing effective data practices. PELICAN is the State's early childhood data management system and includes all ingredients required, PELICAN also has a subsystem that collects data at the child and program levels. The State will create a bridge to connect PELICAN with the K-12 Statewide Longitudinal Data System already in place. Most importantly, the State is already using data collected in PELICAN to inform policy decisions.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</b>	20	15

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

- (a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;
- (b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and
- (c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(2)**

The State's goals are ambitious yet achievable. The State defines three goals, identifies the State's present status, and defines High Quality Plans to meet the goals. Information presented clearly shows the State has a foundation in place which will help them in achieving their goals. For example, the State has Learning Standards aligned birth-3rd grade and the State has developed a High Quality Plan which will enable them to integrate these Standards into the Standards Aligned System (SAS) data system, a comprehensive tool for educator use. Another example of how the State has developed a High Quality Plan to support their goals revolves around the TQRIS. The TQRIS is in place for some programs and the state has established a plan to enable more programs to voluntarily join the TQRIS, including Head Start, Pre-K Counts, school-based PreK, and licensed nursery schools, thus increasing quality of Early Learning and Development Programs. The plan also includes case management and Technical Assistance for Programs serving Children with High Needs. Although this approach serves to address the development of Early Childhood Educators in the area of Children with High Needs, it will not address closing the achievement gap unless the State defines a method for drawing programs into participation or requiring participation. The State's reform agenda has a strong basis in data collection and improving data systems but provides limited information to link those data systems with improving outcomes for children. In fact, implementation of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment is planned to provide documentation of child and program success but is not yet in place and is a very limited pilot stage. The State provides a summary of the rationale supporting the Focused Investment Areas chosen. These rationale are concise and clearly relate to the goals and High Quality Plans the state has set. For example, the State has chosen to address (C)(1) to develop and use statewide, Early Learning and Development Standards. The State has established that the standards have been developed but are currently limited in usage by program time and are used mostly in child care programs. The State has developed a High Quality Plan to expand the use of the standards into Head Start, Pre-K Counts, Early Intervention, and licensed nursery schools to ensure it is a statewide system. The State does not provide rationale for why other criteria were not addressed. For example, no rationale is provided regarding (C)(3) not being chosen and why the "health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs" is of less priority in the state and therefore not addressed as a Focused Investment Area.

	Available	Score
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The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (A)(3)**

A governance structure has been in place since 2002 in the State. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) is a collaboration between the Department of Education and the Department of Public Welfare. OCDEL has been coordinating with several stakeholder groups including the State Early Learning Council which includes representatives from various programs and organizations, state agencies, business and community organizations, and parents; the State Interagency Coordinating Council which consists of parents of children in Early Intervention Services and state employees; and the Early Learning Investment Commission who represent businesses from across the state. These stakeholder groups have been meeting regularly and have provided feedback to the State regarding Early Learning and Development Programs. Furthermore, all three of these organizations have included detailed letters of support. The State shows a history of successful interagency efforts through OCDEL which is a good indication that further collaboration will be successful as well. OCDEL has lead successful efforts to develop State Early Learning and Development Standards, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, a career lattice, family engagement strategies, and data systems. This is evidence that further collaboration defined in the scope-of-Work and in the MOUs will be successful and that a system or approach for dealing with conflicts is effectively in place. In addition, dispute resolution procedures are included in the MOUs and agreed to by each agency. The Deputy Secretary of OCDEL holds weekly Executive Team meetings within the Departments of Education and Public Welfare. The Team will review progress, allocate resources, and serve as the problem solving body should issues arise. Roles and responsibilities have been explicitly defined for OCDEL and for the other State Agencies involved including the Department of Education and

the Department of Public Welfare as well as for other governing bodies including the Early Learning Council, State Interagency Coordinating Council, and the Early Learning Investment Commission. Each agency has committed to the work as defined in the scope-of-work included in the application. The State includes letters of support from a wide variety of stakeholders including legislators, business and community leaders, foundations, K-12 and Higher Education, and early childhood organizations. Notable letters of support come from two home-based child care associations who are excited about the professional development opportunities and the opportunity to participate in the State TQRIS yet no letters of support were included from the agencies within the Local Education and Resource Networks (LEARN), the basis of much of the local implementation strategy, which could indicate a lack of support from these agencies.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

(1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;

(2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and

(3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(4)**

The projects in Budget Table I-3 are directly aligned with the goals of the State plan. OCDEL manages budgets and operations for 25 different programs serving early learners and their families. The State will leverage some funds from these programs to support RTT-ELC projects. For example, the State currently collects a total of \$26M from various agencies including TANF, Child Care Development Block Grant, and others which will continue to be allocated to data system development and support. An additional \$3.8M from the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems funds will support development of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Another example is in the area of family engagement, the State has funding from private foundations that has been in place as part of a three year grant. The State will use these funds in combination with RTT-ELC funds to provide information to parents regarding the importance and impact of quality programs for their children and will make information about program quality readily available to parents. While the State is leveraging existing funds to some extent, the majority of costs associated with the State's High Quality Plans will be addressed by RTT-ELC grant funding. This creates concerns for sustainability and indicates that many of the projects associated with RTT-ELC will not continue after the grant period has ended. An area of concern in the budget is that funds have been requested to "subsidize authentic child observations from 3rd party vendors" with the State covering 100% of costs for providers in year one and then gradually withdrawing support until providers cover 100% of the costs in year 4. A total of \$2.1 million is requested in year 1 which will be passed to providers over the next four years. While this approach is ambitious and addresses sustainability, it may not be an achievable goal for providers based on cost per child, reimbursement rates, economic climate, and other factors. Another area of concern in the budget is the limited amount of funds dedicated to the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The State is using \$3.8M of Fiscal Year 2013 State Longitudinal Data Systems funding to support work related to the Kindergarten Entry Assessment but it is not clear how those funds will be used. It is stated that RTT-ELC funds will be used to develop, pilot, validate, provide Professional Development, and create the data management system for the Assessment but only \$180,000 is dedicated in years one and two of the grant and \$325,000 in year three. This amount is not sufficient for these activities.

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

	Available	Score
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**(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System**

10

7

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;
- (5) Health promotion practices; and
- (6) Effective data practices;

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(1)**

The State has established Early Learning and Development Standards for multiple settings including Centers, Group Homes, and Family Child Care Homes and multiple ages including infants/toddlers, Pre-K, and Kindergarten. The standards are strongly integrated into the TQRIS. For example, at level one of the system educators just have to have a copy of the standards. At levels three and four providers must implement the standards as well as crosswalk them to the curriculum and assessment being used. A Comprehensive Assessment System is in place that includes child screening upon entry to the program and measures of environmental quality through implementation of the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS). The State refers to authentic child assessment which meets the requirement of Formative Assessment but limited information is provided. Early Childhood Educator Qualifications are tied strongly to the TQRIS. Steps on the career lattice are defined by education and professional development required at each level beginning with a high school diploma and 15 hours of training at the bottom level and a Ph.D. with early childhood coursework at the highest level. The inclusion of health promotion is not clear. Health promotion is said to be woven throughout the standards yet seems to be based mostly on environmental safety rather than on teaching children the importance of physical activity, healthy eating, and oral health. The standards of the TQRIS are measurable. For example, in the area of staff qualifications and professional development, clear standards are set regarding level of education and the number and type of professional development required at each level. Another example of the measurable nature of the TQRIS is in the level of utilization of the Early Learning and Development Standards as mentioned above. The connection between the TQRIS and program quality has been documented using results from the Environment Rating Scale (ERS). Programs at level 3 of the TQRIS scored an average of 5.2 on the ERS while programs at level 4 scored an average of 5.6. This is documentation that the TQRIS has a clear link to program quality. In regards to outcomes for children, the State provides an outcome of 65% of children in the top tiers of the TQRIS had age-appropriate literacy, numeracy, and social skills yet no data was given regarding the skills of children in programs in the lower tiers. Another issue is that the State does not site national standards of excellence other than that when compared to the quality categories of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, the Standards have "nearly" every quality category. There is not mention of standards from the National Association for the Education of Young Children or other national standards. The state has provided a wealth of information to support that the standards are tiered and support learning outcomes for children. The TQRIS is linked to the State licensing system in a limited way such that if the program has issues with licensing, the TQRIS rating is removed until such a time as the program is back in good standing with licensing and once again meeting the requirements of the TQRIS. There is not evidence in the narrative that the State's licensing process establishes a system of support to assist programs on returning to licensed status which makes it difficult to determine how these programs rejoin TQRIS.

**(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System**

Available

Score

15

7

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;

- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
  - (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
  - (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
  - (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;
- (b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and
- (c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(2)**

The State has articulated a plan to increase the number of programs participating in the TQRIS by modifying the data tracking system to allow for expanded use. This would increase usage by program types that have been limited users including Pre-K Counts, school-based Pre-K programs, Title 1 programs, early intervention programs, and licensed nursery schools. The plan also includes incentives for programs that serve children who receive early intervention services as well as incentives for child care which include professional development, case management, branding and grants/awards. Head Start programs would receive the same incentives with the exception of grants/awards. Finally, the State will crosswalk standards from different program types to the TQRIS so programs can get TQRIS credit based on their program standards. The State does not mention a plan to help more families afford high-quality child care or maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs. The State does mention incentives for programs that enroll receiving early intervention services but not for other children who meet the definition of Children with High Needs. Since subsidy rates may not cover the costs of increasing the quality, programs may not be able to maintain or increase the number of subsidy slots in their program while at the same time increasing the quality to achieve a higher tier rating. The State's failure to include other Children with High Needs in their planning is a concern for the effectiveness of the plan. The State's strategies may have a chance of success in increasing the number of programs that receive subsidy funding participating in the TQRIS but does not identify strategies that will significantly increase other program types participating. Indeed the targets for participation by the end of 2016 seem less than ambitious with only 45% or 395 Head Start and Early Head Start programs expected to participate. Also surprising is a target of only 55.8% of programs receiving CCDF funding which is only a 5.8% increase from the baseline. The limited increase proposed by the State will not have a significant impact increasing or maintaining high-quality child care.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	15	12

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

- (a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and
- (b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

The State has a monitoring system in place for the TQRIS. Programs are monitored once every two years unless there is a change in circumstances. Multiple sources of information are taken into account which gives a more comprehensive picture of the program than a single, snap-shot approach would provide. The sources of data include -Environmental Rating Scale - all four parts, -Documentation to support standards, -Licensing reports, and -Observations by TQRIS "designators" TQRIS designators and ERS assessors receive training and reliability standards are maintained for ERS assessors. However, a pilot project established reliability for TQRIS assessors but no mention is made of how the pilot was continued or expanded to ensure reliability across the State. Having both ERS assessors and TQRIS designators involved in the program assessment process provides some assurance that the tier achieved is a true reflection of the quality of the program. Information provided to parents is comprehensive and includes many avenues to reach a diverse population of families. -Website with a multitude of search criteria; includes many search criteria families can use to locate programs that meet their needs -Child

Care Information Offices: these offices also house the subsidy program; staff work with families to provide information needed to make informed decisions about choosing the Early Learning and Development Program that meets their needs -Toll free phone number -Branding for programs: programs use the TQRIS designation to attract families to their program It is not clear how families currently enrolled or who are seeking a program know about these information resources and therefore know how to choose a top-tier program. It is not clear if programs post information on-site, if the State advertises in a global way, if communities are expected to get information out to their own families, or if there are other ways families find out about these resources.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	20	12

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

The State has implemented an incentive system to support continuous improvement. The incentives and supports are as follows: 1. Training - the State provides low-cost professional development and financial assistance for course work 2. Technical Assistance (TA) - a stakeholder team meets quarterly to define needs and develop supports. TA is then available to all programs including those that do not participate in TQRIS. TA consultants must meet competency standards that address not only professional knowledge and skills but also relationship skills, communication, and understanding of change. TA is targeted to include infant care, school age care, and social/emotional development. The TA approach is one that generates buy-in from stakeholders since needs are self-identified and a plan is created and implemented by the program rather than by an outside source. The focus on comprehensive skills for the TA consultants takes this TA approach from good to great, 3. Financial Awards - To be eligible for awards the program must have at least 5% of children who receive subsidy or early intervention services. The amount of the award increases as the number of High Needs children increases. Beginning the incentives with programs in which 5% of children receive a subsidy seems like a low target. The amount a program receives in subsidy also increases as their TQRIS rating increases. The State pays limited attention to supporting working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Programs. The State uses the subsidy office to provide information and funding to families but that seems to be the limit of the State's efforts to support working families. No mention is made whether state-funded PreK and Head Start programs provide full-day, full-year services or of whether or not the number of subsidy spaces met the need of families in the State. It is not clear whether there is a waiting list for subsidy funding. The State provides assistance to families through Child Care Information Services (CCIS). Staff at CCIS work with families to help them understand the importance of high quality programs, provide information about the TQRIS, and make referrals to community services. No mention is made of helping working families involved in Head Start or Pre-K Counts with full-year or wrap around services. While Head Start families receive support and community referrals from the Head Start agency when needed, children involved in Pre-K Counts do not appear to have access to these same supports. The State's approach is comprehensive and is effective as demonstrated by the goal of having 50% of programs receiving TA moving up a TQRIS level. The targets of the number and percentages of children in the top tiers of the TQRIS are ambitious yet achievable because of the TA and incentive plan proposed by the State. For example, increasing the percentage of children in state-funded preschool from 44.3% to 93% by 2016 doubles the number of state-funded preschool children in top tiers of the TQRIS and increasing the number of children in programs receiving Child Care Development Funds from the current level of 41,652 to 58,796 children in 2016 impacts a large number of children.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	15	14

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (B)(5)**

The State has studied the connection between the TQRIS and differing levels of program quality and found a positive correlation. The TQRIS has been part of two national studies in an effort by the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. In addition, the State commissioned a study by a state university to investigate the fidelity of implementation, impact on program quality, and the impact of family and child outcomes. This study was conducted after year 1 and year 2 of implementation. The evaluation also investigated why only 14% of regulated providers participated in TQRIS. The State made adjustments based on the evaluation and conducted another study after year 4 of implementation. At that time 45.6% of regulated providers participated in the TQRIS. This study found the TQRIS ratings reliable and connected to an increase in quality between tiers. The State continued to make improvements and in 2010 performed a comprehensive evaluation which included external evaluators as well as surveys of programs and parents. The results of this study were published and share with other states who were developing tiered rating systems. The State also provides evidence of the following: 1) Providers who receive TA are 2.2 times more likely to move up a tier, 2) Reliability of TQRIS designators, 3) Random selection of ERS classrooms for assessment, 4) Rigorous reliability standards for ERS assessors, and 5) CLASS used in pilot found tier 4 classrooms "slightly higher" than tier 3. Less information is provided to demonstrate the relationship between levels on the TQRIS and child outcomes. In 2009-10 the State collected enrollment and outcome data on children in tier 3 and 4 programs and reported "significantly" better gains for children in higher quality programs based on ERS scores, TQRIS level, and staff qualifications. This was not an independent or external study so bias could be a factor in the results. Also, data was not collected on tier 1 and tier 2 children and only includes data for one year. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions regarding the results. The State has developed a High Quality Plan to address the weaknesses of previous studies and to evaluate whether TQRIS level has an impact on child outcomes. The High Quality Plan will consider outcomes for children at all levels of the TQRIS system and will include children from tier 1-4. The plan is longitudinal and examines outcomes in kindergarten as well as third grade. The plan also includes recruiting a team of expert researchers to analyze the data. This will address the question of bias and provide valid and reliable data regarding the impact of TQRIS level and child outcomes.

**Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application--

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C);
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E)

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	17



The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--

- (a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;
- (c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and
- (d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(1)**

The State's Early Learning and Development Standards are culturally and linguistically appropriate as demonstrated by excerpts provided in the narrative. The standards include an Introduction and Guiding Principles section which addresses English Language Learners and children with diverse needs. The standards are research based and address all Essential Domains of School Readiness as indicated by the headings contained in the standards. The standards are aligned with academic standards for grades K-3. An external study was conducted in 2009 to analyze alignment and used the information from the study to guide the revision to the standards. The Early Learning and Development Standards are currently used as a framework for instruction and are a part of the guidance for the TQRIS as well as for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program. Publishing companies have aligned curricula to the standards and a few publishers have aligned assessment while others are still in the process of aligning assessments. All state-funded programs use curricula and assessments aligned to the standards. The State does not indicate the fidelity with which programs utilize and implement the standards currently. Although having publishing companies align curriculum and assessments to the standards is a good step, each company will do so with varying degrees of thoroughness. Also, following an aligned curriculum will not provide the same fidelity as if an educator has participated in considerable training in the standards and has a true understanding of the elements contained. It is also not clear whether programs that are not funded by the State utilize curricula and a Comprehensive Assessment System that align to the standards. The State has existing standards and curriculum portal in use for K-grade 12. Some of the Early Learning and Development Standards are already included in this portal and the State has a High Quality Plan to include the other standards as well. This, in conjunction with the Professional Development that is also included in the State's High Quality Plan will assist educators in accessing, understanding, and utilizing the standards. Also, once developed, the State's SAS standards portal will offer a crosswalk to other program standards including NAEYC, Head Start, State Academic Standards, and the state Core Body of Knowledge. Providing this crosswalk will enable these programs to articulate how standards from different program types align and therefore reduce barriers to participation in the TQRIS. Other resources have also been created including a DVD for practitioners. Finally, many four year colleges and universities are including the Early Learning and Development Standards as well as the standards portal in their coursework.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--

- (a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;
- (b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;
- (c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and
- (d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(2)**

Implementation of a Comprehensive Assessment System has begun in the State. The Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) is used by programs using the TQRIS and the Pre-K Counts program. The ERS is a valid and reliable tool and is a good way to evaluate environmental quality. In addition, a separate measure of adult-child interaction is being considered. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was piloted in a limited number of settings across the state to assess adult-child interactions but does not have widespread usage in the State. Child Assessment includes a program selected screener, program selected authentic assessment, and outcomes assessment that is reported into the state data system and can be seen and used at the child/classroom level, program level, or state level. Little information is provided regarding any of these assessments so quality of the System is not clear. The State's plan to strengthen educator understanding of assessment and the Comprehensive Assessment System has a good chance of success. The plan begins with providing written information to educators including a document that summarizes various assessments and the extent of their alignment. The plan also includes adding information into SAS, the state standards and curriculum data portal. The final piece is to embed assessment into the state Core Body of Knowledge. The last two items are of critical importance. Including assessment in the SAS ensures educators have a location they can access reliable information about assessment at their convenience. Embedding assessment into the Core Body of Knowledge, the State ensures there will be continued emphasis, focus, and attention given. The State's proposed data systems will ensure assessment efforts are not duplicated. The State demonstrates consideration of the impact coordination of services for children enrolled in more than one Program will be beneficial to outcomes for that child. The Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN) data system contains all Essential Data Elements. In addition it houses a subsystem that collects child outcomes data and ERS scores and then feeds that information into PELICAN to integrate with other data. PELICAN is not yet bridged to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. Locations that are not using PELICAN can develop local agreements regarding sharing of assessment results. It is not clear if this is a wide-spread practice or simply a suggestion the State has made to local programs. The State has developed a plan to develop a child outcomes framework for birth-Pre-K that is aligned to the proposed Kindergarten Inventory, is aligned to a multitude of authentic assessments and screeners, and can be used to provide information at the child level to inform instruction and at the state level to inform policy decisions. This plan is ambitious but achievable given the State's current progress. The second part of the state's plan is to increase provider understanding of screening tools. The State will work with the state Academy of Pediatrics and provide training modules on various topics that the Pediatrician, nurse, nurse Practitioner, etc. can then share with parents. Training modules will also be developed for Early Childhood Educators in the elements of the Comprehensive Assessment System.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

- (a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;
- (b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and
- (c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (C)(4)

The State has been implementing family engagement and outreach strategies. The TQRIS includes an increasing progression of family partnership at each level. Additionally, the Early Learning and Development Standards for Infant/Toddlers, Pre-K, and Kindergarten all include standards for involving families in an ongoing way. Standards exist for program entry, assessment and screening, parent training, communication, and transition to the next program. The State has created documents for families in Spanish and English. These resources use pictures and short chunks of text to increase readability. In addition, the State has focused on training in family engagement as evidenced by two areas. First, the State's trainer registry includes 615 instructors who list family engagement as an area of expertise. Second, the State has invested in Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework trainers who provided two trainings in each region of the state. There is a growing body of providers who have received this training. The State also has a variety of other programs serving families including: 1) Home visitation programs serving every county of the state, 2) Local Education And Resource Networks (LEARN), 3) Early Intervention staff going into home to work with families, and 4) Child Care Information Services with staff and web resources for families. Finally, the State has Children's Trust Fund grants that train center and home-based providers in the Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework. The State has created a High Quality Plan to connect these wide-spread efforts together into the Family Engagement Project and to focus efforts on communities with High Need Children. Rather than implementing a one-size-fits-all plan for family engagement, the State plans to leverage resources already in place at the community level while providing support and resources to communities. Support and resources will go toward providing a Train the Trainers for the Strengthening Families framework to increase the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained in family engagement, expanding the number of Pediatricians, clinics, and other medical service providers using the Reach Out and Read project, and to improve information for families by creating and implementing the Guiding Parents Smoothly (GPS) web-based tool. The State plans to leverage existing resources by utilizing Early Intervention, Local Education and Resource Network (LEARN) Teams, home visitation programs, Child Care Information

Services, and services and supports from the Children's Trust Fund. The State has positioned these resources to be the backbone of family engagement in the local communities. It is unclear whether any of the LEARN agencies in the State have provided a letter of support. Since grass-roots efforts are so critical to the State's family engagement efforts, a letter of support from some LEARN agencies would have provided evidence of partnership.

#### D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--

- (a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;
- (b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
- (c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (D)(1)

The State created a great deal of capacity in the area of workforce knowledge and credentials. For example, the State has already created and implemented a Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WKC) Framework that meets all of the criteria required by definition yet the WKC does not have a track for infant/toddler teachers. The State has developed and implemented a statewide progression of degrees and credentials. The system is inclusive of program types including Early Learning and Development Programs, public and private schools, TA consultants, and higher education faculty. The state also has a statewide protocol to create consistency in credits given and identification of how the credit fits into the progression. A paper-based Professional Development Record is used by educators to track professional development and instructors and educators have been trained of usage of the record. Finally, the State has a history of collaboration with higher education. Currently, stakeholders from higher education serve on advisory boards to help establish and revise the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Some higher education institutions also provide a 9-hour Director credential. The State has recognized two areas for focus and has created a High Quality Plan to address tracking of educator credentials and results and a plan to address the career development needs of infant/toddler educators. The State has three registries including a Professional Development Registry, an Instructor Registry, and a Workforce Registry. The State has created a High Quality Plan to combine these systems. The State's rationale for this is that they systems must be integrated, fully computerized, and linked to make the most use of the data available and to connect child outcomes to educator qualifications and TORIS level. Activities of the plan include incorporating the TQRIS, Environmental Rating Scale, and Technical Assistance systems as well as child outcomes data. This plan does not indicate how educators will use the information gathered to increase outcomes for Children with High Needs. This system will allow for overall monitoring at many levels including the individual teacher, program, region, and state levels if local programs have the technology capacity to access the data. The consolidation of data will allow for local and state decision-makers to make informed decisions. The second part of the State's plan will address the gap in career information, support, and resources for infant/toddler teachers. The State's rationale, as required by a High Quality Plan, is that they have identified a gap created by changes in the public school teacher credential to create a PK-4th grade credential. This resulted in decreased higher education course work on infant and toddler development and fewer Educators with infant/toddler credentials. The state will include an infant/toddler piece in the career lattice. As required by a High Quality Plan, the State has identified the following activities to support this focus area: 1) development of a career pathway on the career lattice, 2) development of competencies, 3) development of content, and 4) design and implementation of professional development. This will require further partnership with institutions of higher education to provide coursework aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, online courses, and career advisement. The creation of a career pathway, competencies, content, and professional development are activities that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and are important ingredients of this High Quality Plan. The State establishes that personnel from institutions of higher education have been involved in the development of the Workforce Knowledge Competency Framework and also provide training for leaders and administrators in early learning programs. However, no mention is made whether pre-service coursework is aligned to the WKC or the extent of alignment with coursework for educators aimed at improving their educational levels.

**E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress**

The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	20	8

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that—

- (a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;
- (c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;
- (d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and
- (e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(1)**

The State does not have a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment and has established a very limited foundation for developing an entry assessment including identification of limited budget resources. The State has engaged in three activities it has identified as preliminary steps to position itself to develop the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. First, the State created Early Learning and Development Standards aligned to K-12 standards and to assessments for 0-5 year old children. An external evaluation was conducted and Standards were adjusted to ensure alignment. Next, the State participated in an early childhood longitudinal study to better understand the impact of Early Learning and Development Programs on kindergarten readiness. Finally, the state partnered with an assessment vendor to validate authentic assessment tools and to vertically align assessment for three and four year old children. Although these are important projects, they do not directly address the development and implementation of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The State indicates that it will not replace the assessment tools currently used by teachers and districts but will compile, align, and integrate data from sources in place to create a picture of the child. While this will prevent a one-size-fits-all approach to assessment and allow programs to continue to evaluate assessment tools that meet the needs of the children they serve it does not address use of a common, state-wide tool or system of tools. The State does not indicate how it will align the tools currently in place, whether it will evaluate the tools in place to determine reliability and validity of those tools, or what actions will be taken if tools in place are not sufficient. The State has begun work on a limited pilot project for Kindergarten Entry Assessment. While a process has been determined along with a timeline for implementation by 2014, the timeline does not seem realistic considering the current status of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment in the State. One year of funding has been identified through the Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant to assist with work related to the Assessment but the State has not indicated how those funds will be used. In addition, the State has dedicated a limited amount of RTT-ELC funding to this project which will not support the development, validation, professional development, and implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	17

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--

- (a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- (b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- (c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;
- (d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and
- (e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

The State has been developing Early Childhood data systems since 2002 and the system has been determined to have the data elements needed already in place by a national study of early childhood data systems. Furthermore, the current system allows for uniform data collection and is linked to systems in other agencies to allow for sharing of information and reduces of duplication of services. The State has a Statewide Longitudinal Data System for K-12 and a bridge will be created to connect the EC and K-12 systems which will allow for tracking of outcomes for children on kindergarten entry assessments. This will also allow the tracking of children by program attended as well as provide information on success of Children with High Needs. The State will also create a parent dashboard and a provider dashboard to help users understand and manage information. These dashboards will provide timely information to users which can then be used to influence decisions at the child and family level as well as at the program, district, region, and state levels. The State's overall data plan is comprehensive and is focused on ease of use by the consumers whether the consumer is a parent with limited technology skills or a state level administrator with considerable technology skills although the Plan does not address how families of Children with High Needs will gain access to the technology needed to retrieve the data. The plan allows for existing data systems to be maintained or updated to provide the additional information required. This should increase the comfort level of users and increase access to data and usage of data in a timely way. No information is provided regarding how the State will address a data governance policy that identifies elements to be collected and maintained nor does it address a current or planned transparency policy to alert parents to the personally identifiable information contained in the data system. These are important elements of Data System Oversight Requirements that have been neglected.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>210</b>

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

- (a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and
- (b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (P)(2)**

The State's plan to implement a licensing and inspection system that covers all programs not otherwise regulated by the State seems to be the inclusion of these programs in the TQRIS. Therefore section (a) and section (b) of this priority are tied closely together. The State has proposed to gradually integrate programs by type into the TQRIS but has not identified strategies for ensuring all licensed or State-regulated programs participate. Instead, the State refers to "programs seeking participation" which indicates participation is voluntary and no motivation for participation by programs such as Head Start, state-funded preschool, and private nursery schools is mentioned. There is a lack of expectation that all programs will participate as demonstrated by Table (B)(2)(3) which shows the State's goal for participation of programs in the TQRIS to be considerably less than 100% by the end of the grant period. For example, the State's goal for programs receiving CCDF is only 55.8% which is a 5.8% increase from the current status. This goal is not an ambitious goal nor does it meet the criteria of this Priority for "all" licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs to participate in a TQRIS. No plan is established for drawing in Programs that do not voluntarily agree to join.

**Priorities**

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
<b>Comments on P(3)</b>		
<p>The State does not currently have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment in place nor did the State earn 70% of points available on criterion (E)(1). The State has a very small pilot project in place for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Also, the State has not been clear in the budget established for the assessment so it appears that the amount budgeted from RTT-ELC and other funds are insufficient for the development and implementation process of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Finally, the timeline established by the State is unrealistic when considering the lack of progress on the Kindergarten Entry Assessment to date.</p>		

**Absolute Priority**

	Met? Yes/No
<b>Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.</b>	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
<b>Comments on Absolute Priority</b>	
<p>The State has built capacity in Early Learning and Development in many areas by focusing on early learning for the last 10 years. This focus has allowed the State to develop Early Learning and Development Standards, a TQRIS, and a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. In this time, the State has succeeded at achieving a TQRIS participation rate of approximately a 50% by state-funded preschool and programs receiving CCDF dollars. The State has a reform plan to increase the number of programs in the top levels of the TQRIS and to increase the number of Children with High Needs in programs in the top tiers. To improve outcomes for Children with High Needs. The State also has established a plan to add infant/toddler data to the Workforce Career Lattice to ensure a Great Early Childhood Education Workforce. Finally, the State has established data management systems that share information to reduce duplication of efforts and to track school readiness of children.</p>	





Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review



Technical Review Form Page

Application # PA-5031

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/15/2011 - 9:19 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 16. Includes detailed text for each sub-point (a) through (d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Historically, Pennsylvania's commitment to providing early learning and development services to high-needs children has been strong, as evidenced by several initiatives and activities at the state level designed to create a coherent and aligned organizational structure for multiple early learning programs...



the absence data from previous years, it is not possible to determine the meaningfulness of these gains (although they are quite high). In summary, the state's previous and current commitment to early learning and development has been well-documented. The range of early learning initiatives and funding – and the coordination of efforts through the OCDEL – provide a strong foundation for the proposed plans to increase access to and improve quality of early learning services. In sum, the quality of the state's response to this criterion has been evaluated as being, overall, in the high range; however, concerns regarding the recent drop in financial investment resulted in the response being awarded the lowest points in the high range (80%).

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</b>	20	10

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;

(b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (A)(2)

Despite multiple initiatives to date reflecting the state's commitment to early learning and development programs (and, thus, providing a strong foundation for advancing significant reform), the scope of the state's proposed reform agenda is somewhat limited to issues surrounding data management, assessment, and data dissemination versus more focused efforts to use data to improve practice (and, in turn, child outcomes). This restricted scope is illustrated, in part, by the four overarching guiding questions for the proposed activities, three of which address primarily measurement (e.g., How is Kindergarten readiness defined and measured?) and/or data monitoring and reporting. The state has delineated three goals for "closing the readiness gap between children with high needs and their peers." The first is to increase the number of high-quality programs serving children with high needs by (a) expanding overall participation (although not explicitly among programs serving children with high needs) in Keystone STARS (the state's TQRIS) by 25%, and (b) providing technical assistance for Keystone STARS programs explicitly serving children with high needs (although a percentage increase in programs that will receive assistance is not targeted). The second goal is to help programs engage parents; and the third is to develop a curriculum to teach early educators how to identify developmental delays (although an implementation plan is not described). The plan for achieving each goal is not well articulated relative to the key elements of a High Quality Plan as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) - e.g., key activities and rationale for activities; how activities will be scaled up; realistic timeline, etc. In addition, the "pathway" between each goal and "closing the readiness gap" (as indicated in the summary chart of the state's reform agenda included with the narrative) is not explicit. For example, the link between participation in Keystone STARS and closing the readiness gap is not directly explained. In terms of "improving program quality," the goal is to integrate data systems and maximize use of these data. According to the narrative, the link between (a) information/data about program components and child outcomes and (b) program quality rests on the ability of teachers, administrators, and policymakers being "able to effectively use this information to drive decision-making at the classroom, program, and policy level." Although the activities associated with this goal are designed to increase the extent to which comprehensive data are made available to key stakeholders, again, the critical pathway to "improving program quality" is not well explained. Therefore, it is not clear that the proposed primary focus on data management will, in fact, achieve the goal of improving program quality. Finally, achieving the goal of "improving child outcomes" rests extensively on two key activities: (a) aligning and integrating early learning standards with the state's K-12 standards, and (b) developing a birth-8 educator professional development continuum (primarily via establishment of an infant-toddler professional development framework). Similar to a general concern with the other goals, there is limited discussion (evidence and/or rationale) of how these activities are directly connected with improved child outcomes. The proposal has identified and provided some justification for its focus on specific criteria within each focused investment area. In some instances, there is a "disconnect" between the rationale and the criterion. For example, the rationale for the state's focus on criterion C-1 ("developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards") rests on the need to integrate and align the extant Early Learning and Development standards with the state's academic standards for Grades 3-12. Although important, the rationale does not directly speak to the need to use early learning standards to strengthen outcomes for young children. Similarly, the rationale for a focus on criterion C-2 ("supporting effective use of Comprehensive Assessment Systems") is based on the need to "make information more easily accessible and reduce duplication of assessments for children enrolled in multiple programs." Again, that rationale does not link directly to effective use of assessment information. In general, there were deficiencies in the description of the state's "high-quality plan" vis-à-vis the specific elements delineated in the NIA. Moreover, the overall reform agenda (and activities included as part of the agenda) are related to, but do not follow a direct pathway to achieving the RTT-ELC goals of improving program quality, improving child outcomes, and closing the achievement gap.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (A)(3)

The extent to which early learning and development efforts will be effectively aligned and coordinated across the state will be significantly enhanced as a result of the establishment of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) in 2007, which will serve as the lead agency for the project and is a depute of both the Department of Education (PDE) and the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). Although the Department of Health is included as part of the state's early learning governance structure (as a participating state agency [PSA] along with OCDEL, PDE, and DPW), there are no "key activities" involving this department in Table (A)(3)(d), nor a budget. [There is, however, a Memorandum of Agreement from the Department of Health included in the appendix.] Two participants are identified in the narrative as part of the governance structure [Pennsylvania Early Learning Council and State Interagency Coordinating Council]; however, each is listed in Table A(3)-2 as an early learning intermediary organization (not PSA). Beyond these discrepancies or omissions, there is a good plan for coordinating activities and maintaining communication among the key stakeholders, with major responsibility for the success of the coordination (decision-making, resolving conflicts, etc.) resting within the OCDEL. For example, the plan includes ongoing meetings and scheduled reports from each PSA. The plan also incorporates elements of a "high-quality plan," as operationalized in the NIA. A table (and narrative) identifies the key goal, four activities associated with the goal, and a broad time frame for achieving activity milestones (e.g., "ongoing"). The state proposes to address the needs of different types of early learning and development programs, as well as those of children with high need, through representation of these constituent groups in the overall governance structure,

although the formal mechanisms for channeling their input is not fully specified. Finally, a review of the MOUs and letters of support reveals that each participating state agency is committed to the specific activities and work scope explained in the narrative, and that there is broad stakeholder support for the proposed RTT-ELC initiative. Overall, the plan will build on a well-established early learning and development governance structure and a strong, well-documented commitment to early learning at the state level. Thus, the response to this criterion is rated as high.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	15	10

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used:

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

- (1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;
- (2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and
- (3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (A)(4)

The project proposes to use RTT-ELC funding to "develop and expand systems that the state can maintain without additional funding following the grant period." One of the activities to do this is to expand Keystone STARS to bring additional programs into the quality rating and improvement system. The goal for this component of the project is to increase by 25% the number of programs serving children with high-needs that participate in Keystone STARS. It is not clear a long-term objective of folding in 100% of early learning and development programs will be accomplished once the grant period has ended. There is no evidence or documentation that the state will be able to continue to expand Keystone STARS to include more programs through its current operating budget, without additional support. Given the significant level of RTT-ELC funding required across four years to achieve a 25% increase in Keystone STARS participation (\$140,000 for OCDEL-Education and \$37,403,780 for OCDEL-Public Welfare), this anticipated sustainability element may not be achieved. Although one example was provided in the narrative to illustrate the states' second strategy to ensure sustainability of the RTT-ELC funded initiatives (i.e., reallocating existing resources), documentation for this sustainability strategy (i.e., delineation of the targeted reallocation efforts) was missing. Finally, two aspects of the proposed budget were missing explanation/justification from the narrative. Specifically, the imbalance in the distribution of funds between the two departments (Department of Education and Department of Public Welfare) is not explained (\$30 million vs. \$76 million). There is insufficient evidence provided in the narrative addressing utilization of current funding resources within each key participating state agency. In addition, greater justification is warranted to explain the relatively high allocation of funds to three of the proposed eight projects (i.e., Expand Keystone STARS; Workforce Effectiveness; and 21st Century Reports) relative to the low allocation of funds for the Keystone Framework project. The technological requirements for each project may account for the differentially high distribution of funds for certain activities; however, this is not clear. Without this level of justification, there is insufficient evidence that the budget will support sustained implementation of the work of the grant.

#### B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	10	6

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;
- (5) Health promotion practices; and
- (6) Effective data practices;

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(1)**

Since 2002, the state has had in place a statewide TQRIS called Keystone STARS (thus, representing a system that is substantially or fully implemented). Whereas the RTT-ELC initiative calls for a statewide set of tiered program standards in six areas, the Keystone STARS targets only four areas (one of which, Leadership and Management, does not map directly on to any of the six required areas). Although there is a narrative "crosswalk" between RTT-ELC Program Standards and the content of the STARS standards, the alignment is not comprehensive. For example, there are no clear and measurable standards within STARS to differentiate program quality levels or tiers relative to "health promotion practices." The extent to which program standards relative to Early Learning and Development Standards are represented in the STARS Learning Program standard is somewhat minimal. The tiers or levels of program quality relative to this standard are differentiated on the basis of the program's ratings on the Environment Rating Scale (ERS), alignment of child assessment/observation with standards, and, most relevant, alignment between the curriculum and Early Learning and Development Standards. Although the TQRIS does have measurable standards to differentiate programs at each of the four "star" quality levels, there is only marginal evidence of the link to improved learning outcomes. For example, reporting that more than 65% of preschoolers in STARS level 3 and 4 programs exhibited age-appropriate literacy, numeracy and social skills by the end of the program year does not take into consideration skill levels of either (a) children with high needs, or (b) children participating in STARS level 1 and 2 programs. Finally, according to the narrative, there is a link between STARS and the state's licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs [criterion (B)(1)(c)] to the extent that STARS standards build on the licensing or regulatory standards for each program type. This link is driven by the licensing authority, not the STARS system. In other words, when a program has issues or problems relative to its licensing authority, it is dropped from STARS until the issue is resolved (versus being dropped from being licensed until the STARS standards are met). This is a potential concern because it "un-links" STARS from licensing, disallowing programs to participate in STARS and to receive support to move up the tiered system. In sum, although Keystone STARS is being substantially implemented, the overall quality relative to RTT-ELC criteria is medium.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments,

providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(2)**

Currently, the state promotes participation in its TQRIS primarily through financial incentives (STARS grants and awards) as well as provision of professional development and technical assistance, resulting (to date) in a baseline participation level of less than 50% participation among state-funded preschools, Head Start, and programs receiving CCDF funds. The proposal self-identified two issues that presently undermine the state's ability to move toward 100% participation among all programs: (a) not all programs are tracked through Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children across Networks (PELICAN, the state's information management system), and (b) only site-level (not classroom-level) data are tracked through PELICAN, thereby disallowing an early childhood classroom housed, for example, in an elementary school to participate. The proposal has detailed an appropriate plan (not yet implemented) to address each "gap" with the end result of, first, simply locating potentially eligible participant programs or classrooms and, second, developing STARS professional development strategies and providing assistance to the new program types that are "netted" by the updated and expanded data-monitoring system. The plan is likely to achieve the targeted participation rates listed in Table (B)(2)(3). Despite having "achievable" goals for program participation in the statewide TQRIS, the goals reflected in Table (B)(2)(c) are not considered by the reviewer to be "ambitious" for the following reason: Specifically, only 58% of programs receiving CCDF funds are targeted for participation by 2016 (which is just an 8% increase from the current participation of 50%). The majority of the elements of a "high-quality plan" are apparent in both the narrative and the accompanying table, including three goals (related to increased participation of programs, movement into higher tiers, and greater access to top-tier programs for children with high needs) and eight specific activities linked to the goals. Two elements of the plan (related to addressing needs of all program types and of children with high needs) are not as strong as other elements, in that there is no explanation provided as to how all non-participating programs will be folded into the system (B)(2)(a), and efforts to access children with high needs are not well-specified (e.g., the narrative states that "programs will be offered ... in high need ... counties and cities" without explaining how this will be accomplished)(B)(2)(b).

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

The state is currently implementing a system for rating and monitoring the quality of programs participating in Keystone STARS (referred to as the "STARS Designation System") and has identified areas in which the rating/monitoring system can be improved, with a detailed plan to either continue and/or expand the system. The current STARS Designation system relies heavily on ERS observations/ratings which are completed only for programs applying for Level 3 or Level 4 designations. Similarly, technical assistance to programs to support their efforts to move up and/or maintain their position on the STARS Designation ladder are aimed primarily at Level 3 or Level 4 programs. For example, programs seeking a STAR 1 designation (which likely require maximum technical assistance from OCDEL and may be serving children from low-income neighborhoods) do not have site visits, but, instead submit a paper-based application. A general concern is that disproportionate effort appears to be directed toward programs at the highest level of program quality (versus low-quality programs). The Designator Reliability Pilot project (2009) appears to have uncovered some areas for clarification and further development of guidelines for program rating (based on the project narrative); however, there is limited information about the resulting level of agreement among designators subsequent to the changes. For example, the reliability-check process depicted in the narrative (i.e., each monitor has his/her data cross-checked with those of a OCDEL staff once per every 15 designations) seems reasonable as described, but there are no data regarding level of agreement at baseline (prior to completing an independent visit) and/or the extent to which there is a drop in accuracy across time (i.e., after 15 visits). Therefore, whether this process functions to adequately train and yield high agreement is not known. With respect to criterion (B)(3)(b), the state has multiple mechanisms in place which are being implemented to communicate with families about program quality ratings, of which the program-level marketing tools provided by Keystone STARS are likely to be most accessible and relevant to parents of

low-income children, including COMPASS website, Child Care Information Services, and a range of marketing tools and supports whereby programs can "showcase" their STARS ratings in communication with families and communities.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	20	15

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

The state has in place three primary mechanisms to promote continuous quality improvement among early learning and development programs: (a) Pennsylvania Keys to Professional Development, which allows educators in STARS programs to receive low-cost professional development; (b) technical assistance, some of which is available to programs outside of the STARS system; and (c) financial assistance (e.g., grants and awards), again, for programs that are part of the STARS system. Participation in many of these efforts is voluntary on the part of programs and providers, and, as noted, may not be open to non-STARS programs and providers. It is not evident how wide-spread these policies and practices are. For example, the description of the 2009-10 study reporting a differential benefit of receiving versus not receiving technical assistance does not indicate total number of programs participating. Aside from these issues, however, early learning and development programs, overall, are being well-supported and rewarded for their continuous improvement. Most of the narrative regarding the state's efforts to enable working families of children with high needs to access early learning and development programs focuses on information dissemination to parents regarding programs and referral systems and NOT specifically on strategies to facilitate access to programs per se. Specifically, the narrative response to criterion (B)(4)(b) describes the COMPASS and Child Care Information Services (CCIS) as online services to provide families with information about programs and providers (e.g., hours of operation; level of experience of providers in working with children with high needs), but there is no discussion of efforts to move parents to accessing high-quality programs. Based on information presented in the narrative, it is evident that the state has been most successful in increasing the number and percentage of children with developmental delays who are included with typically-developing children across multiple program types (i.e., increase in number of children with delays/disabilities under age 3 who receive services in early learning and development programs from 15% to 55% over three years). Two targeted projects (Center-Based STARS Coaching Project and Family Child Care Home Mentoring Project) comprise the key activities incorporated into the state's high-quality plan. Each project is well-justified and relies on evidence-based approaches for "reaching out" to programs/families with high-needs children (i.e. coaching and mentoring). As such, each project has a high likelihood of enabling the state to achieve its goals for increasing the number of programs in the top tiers of the TQRIS and increasing the number of children with high needs in top tier programs. Whereas the proposed cluster-randomized study to evaluate the benefits of coaching and mentoring is laudable, it will be critical to ultimately include the counties that do not participate in the programs during the funding period. The state considers the proposed coaching and mentoring projects to be important in supporting teachers and strengthening ELPDs. Therefore, if these interventions are withheld from programs for purposes of conducting an evaluation AND if the interventions prove to be beneficial, then all programs will benefit from receiving them.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	15	13

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (B)(5)**

The proposal has described a high-quality design to evaluate the effectiveness (validity) of the Keystone STARS system. Multiple elements of a high-quality validity study have been incorporated into the state's plan (B)(5)(a). Specifically, randomly selected programs at all four levels within the TORIS (not just STAR 3 and 4 levels, as with previous studies) will be compared on the basis of scores derived from external criterion indicator (CLASS). Second, programs at all four levels will be compared on the basis of child outcomes (while taking into consideration significant moderating effects such as family risk factors). Although the specific child outcome data are not delineated [which resulted in the loss of points for (B)(5)(b)], three features of the proposed validation study -- i.e., (a) inclusion of all levels within the STARS system; (b) evaluation of child outcomes through Grade 3; and (c) examination of moderators -- do render the overall design to be of generally high quality. Moreover, the proposal articulates a detailed plan that describes key goals, activities, and realistic timeline for completing the activities.

**Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application--

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C);
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E).

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.</b>	20	16

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--

(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;

(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and

(d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(1)**

The narrative indicates that the state's early learning and development standards currently cover relevant age groupings and domains of school readiness (as targeted in the RTT-ELC NIA); a review of the standards included in an appendix confirm this. The cultural and linguistic appropriateness of the standards is less evident, and there is no reference to this aspect of the standards in the proposed plan. The narrative does state that skills for English Language Learners (ELLs) to gain language proficiency are embedded in the standards; however, this single feature of the standards is not necessarily an indicator of cultural or linguistic appropriateness. The proposal cites an external evaluation of the general alignment of the early learning standards with the state's K-3 academic standards (Kagan and Scott-Little, 2009), without any supporting narrative description of the alignment, particularly in literacy and math domains. The same evaluation study is also cited in reference to the alignment between the standards and assessment; again, a description of the Standards – Comprehensive Assessment alignment is not provided. In terms of the proposed plan to address identified gaps, the link between the stated goal of the plan ("to demonstrate the foundational role early childhood instruction serves in the continuum of school readiness and success") and the planned activities (e.g., embed all the early learning standards and the Pre-K through Grade 2 curriculum framework into the Standards Aligned System portal) is not entirely clear. Although this link may be implicit, it is not explicitly stated how embedding standards in the portal in and of itself will communicate the critical role of early education. Despite these concerns, the state's plan does include most required elements of a high-quality plan in terms of key activities and timeline.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.</b>	20	15

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--

- (a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;
- (b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;
- (c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and
- (d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(2)**

The primary focus of the state's proposed plan to support effective uses of a comprehensive assessment system is on child outcome measures/tools aligned with the Keystone Child Outcomes Framework (KCOF). Two critical components within a comprehensive assessment system – (a) assessment of environmental quality, and (b) assessment of the quality of adult-child interactions – are not adequately targeted by the state's plan. For example, OCDEL conducted a statewide pilot of the use of the CLASS in 2010, in part, to determine the extent to which CLASS scoring can guide efforts to enhance the quality of early childhood learning environments. The results of this pilot project are not presented/explained, nor is there any indication that a focus on environmental assessment is part of the state's plan. Although the proposed activities are likely to enhance the extent to which providers select, implement, interpret, and utilize information from child assessment procedures (C)(2)(a), the use of environmental measures to improve early childhood practices is not targeted. Specifically, among the "key activities" listed in the table and described in the narrative are several training and professional development initiatives (e.g., delivering an educational curriculum on the use of developmental screening; refining current professional development modules related to assessment), which will support care providers in both understanding the purposes and uses of each type of assessment (C)(2)(b) as well as using child assessment data appropriately [(C)(2)(d)]. It should be noted that the narrative/plan states that there will be "focused attention on appropriate selection of and uses of assessment measures that are culturally and linguistically responsive," as well as responsive to differences in children's ability. It appears that much of this selection process and instrument evaluation will be completed by an external consultant. This is neither a strength nor weakness, but, rather, an implementation feature that will require careful monitoring to ensure that assessment issues related to children with high needs are considered. In terms of criterion (C)(2)(c), the proposal describes the Pennsylvania Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across networks (PELICAN), which, importantly, provides a mechanism to share data among infant/toddler programs, early intervention programs, and preschool programs, thus avoiding duplicative assessments. As for the proposed timeline for developing and implementing the KCOF across state-funded programs, completing key activities to meet this objective (e.g., developing criteria for selecting assessments; evaluating assessment tools; and conducting item-by-item analyses to determine difficulty level) by Spring 2012 may be overly ambitious for a consultant to accomplish.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	20	15



The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

- (a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;
- (b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and
- (c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(4)**

Several key activities that build on and extend current initiatives to promote family engagement are delineated in the state's plan. To the extent that most of these proposed activities are expanding programs that are already being implemented with documented success, the likelihood of accomplishing the key goal ("connect systems that support strong partnerships between child, family, community, and school") is high. The evidence provided to document the "progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate family engagement standards" overall is relatively limited (C)(4)(a). There is only one program/strategy described (development of family-friendly companion documents for the standards in both English and Spanish) which does not reflect a continuum in program standards of implementing progressively greater and/or more culturally- and linguistically-appropriate strategies to engage families. The state has a plan that incorporates a "train-the-trainer" model to address criterion (C)(4)(b). To date, 40 individuals have been trained to understand and implement the Strengthening Families framework. Representatives from all program types will be trained, and, in turn, provide training for their respective programs. In terms of the key activities planned by the state that will use RTT-ELC funds, the expansion of specific projects to increase access among families to high-quality literacy materials ("One Book Every Young Child" and "Reach Out and Read") has a high probability of connecting linguistically and culturally diverse families with books and promoting home literacy activities. Specifically, these types of community outreach programs and programs that introduce more books and print resources into children's homes have strong research foundations. Inasmuch as each campaign requires an investment of funds to purchase and distribute books, it is not evident how and whether these particular initiatives will be sustained beyond the funding period. For example, funding will not be leveraged within a participating state agency for the continued purchasing of books [(C)(4)(c)].

**D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce**

*The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.*

*The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:*

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	40	30

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--

- (a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;
- (b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
- (c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (D)(1)**

This section of the proposal has adopted the same approach as with other sections, which is to (a) describe the current status of the state's progress toward meeting the criterion, (b) identify gaps/needs for change or reform, and, finally, (c) articulate a plan to address the existing gaps. That said, the state has made notable progress to date in developing a statewide workforce knowledge and competency framework (i.e., Core Body of Knowledge [CBK], developed in 2002) and in aligning the progression of credentials and degrees in early childhood education with the CBK. The state has also achieved success in working with postsecondary institutions to align coursework and degree programs with the CBK. Beyond describing the current status, however, neither a rationale for the proposed activities nor an explanation of how certain activities will lead to "improved child outcomes for high need populations" is provided. For example, it is not clear why lacking a "comprehensive grasp of the status of the state's early learning workforce" poses a challenge in developing a workforce competencies framework. Moreover, it is not evident how the proposed activity to address this gap (i.e., creating a single comprehensive registry that contains all workforce data in one central location) will, in fact, contribute to "improved child outcomes." Analysis of early educator workforce data is important, but the link to improved outcomes is not articulated. In other words, collection and analysis of data in and of itself may not necessarily contribute to improved outcomes. It is not explained (and, therefore, not known) exactly how the analysis of workforce data (which will be facilitated by the proposed workforce data systems enhancement) will enhance child learning and development outcomes. The proposal has described several proposed technological initiatives to use RTT-ELC funds to move professional development models for early childhood educators to an online platform for credit and to develop online newsletters, webinars, and other tools for postsecondary institutions. This approach will serve to connect postsecondary institutions with information about CBK and resources to incorporate the content of training modules into existing courses, thus addressing the concern regarding limited availability of faculty.

### E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	20	12

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--

- (a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;
- (c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;
- (d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and
- (e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (E)(1)

The state is not currently implementing, but has made some progress to date in developing, the Keystone Kindergarten Inventory (KKI), which is a common framework for compiling and integrating data from diverse assessment tools (as determined by individual teachers and/or districts) for purposes of (a) reporting child outcome data that are aligned with the state's early learning standards and (b) describing children's development and progress in essential domains of school readiness. This approach to developing a statewide kindergarten entry assessment process has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that rather than dictating a set of specific assessment tools/measures, districts may continue to use their data-gathering procedures (as part of the state's required "Work Sampling System" [WWS] and "Ounce Scale") and report data using the common standards-based framework. The performance-based nature of the WWS renders the approach culturally- and linguistically-appropriate. Whereas some formal assessment measures (especially for an early childhood sample) may not be appropriate for diverse samples, a "portfolio" approach has the advantage of collecting and using an authentic sample of performance indicators. The disadvantage is that the specificity and quality of various assessment tools used to gather information relative to early learning standards can vary considerably, thus calling into question the quality of data which are reported. That is, giving programs flexibility in determining

specific assessment tools, there is a loss of control over quality. One feature of the state's proposed plan (to circumvent this inherent disadvantage) is to provide assistance to districts in terms of selecting assessment tools and measures. Another overarching limitation of the state's plan is that only state-funded early education teachers and public school kindergarten teachers are targeted for use of the inventory (by 2014). In addition, only 6% of RTT-ELC funds for the Department of Education (less than 2% of the entire RTT-ELC budget) will be directed to support the validation and calibration of the KKI, with full implementation by Fall 2014. At face, this does not seem to be an adequate allocation of funding for such a critical and potentially labor-intensive calibration task. The narrative does make reference to funds from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System through OCDEL that will "supplement the K-Entry Inventory work proposed in the grant"; however, this funding appears to be available for only one year. Moreover, it is not clear what "work" will be supported. According to the narrative the Department of Education will continue to monitor and oversee the KKI implementation beyond the funding period; the implication is that the department will continue to support implementation.

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	17

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--

- (a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- (b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- (c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;
- (d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and
- (e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

The state has provided a detailed, high-quality plan to move their current integrated, longitudinal early childhood data system (PELICAN - the product of over 10 years of systematic and progressive work as detailed a table) to a new level of advanced technology that involves the creation of dynamic dashboards for practitioners and for families. The PELICAN includes unique identifiers for consumers, children, providers (in early learning and development programs), and educators (in K-12 systems), as well as demographic information for each; thus, all the essential data elements (as operationalized in the NIA) are included [(E)(2)(a)] and collected uniformly across participating agencies [(E)(2)(b)]. A particularly strong "key activity" within the plan is to develop an advanced data system for mobile service providers, many of whom provide services to children with high needs (particularly young children with developmental delays) in the home or community. This will allow providers who are typically disadvantaged in accessing relevant information to have easy access to data for decision making. The justification for the state's goal (albeit not supported with evidence) of developing advanced provider dashboard and management tools ("21st Century Reports") is based on the claim that "school readiness of children is directly influenced by the information available to early educators and agency directors." As such, the state justifies that the plan will contribute to generating information that is relevant and important for continuous improvement [(E)(2)(d)]. Finally, the proposal indicates that the PELICAN and the proposed advances within the system are "secure" (i.e., information is confidential and protected by security protocols); however, there is no specific explanation regarding compliance with Federal, State, and local laws [(E)(2)(e)]. In sum, the new provider tool will enable the state to achieve multiple objectives related to easy and timely access of standard information.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	280	202

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (P)(2)**

The narrative does not directly address this competitive preference priority. Specifically, there is no plan to enable the state to have in place by June 30, 2015 either (a) a licensing and inspection system that covers all programs not otherwise regulated by the state, or (b) a mandate that all licensed programs ("netted" through the licensing system) participate in the TQRIS. Instead of addressing the two sub-criteria for this competitive preference priority, the narrative describes planned efforts to expand and integrate the PELICAN system to enable participation among additional providers and programs. Although reference is made to the state's response to (B)(2), many elements of a high-quality plan [specifically to achieve (P)(2)(a) and (P)(2)(b)] are not included (e.g., no goals, key activities, designation of responsible parties). The proposal did map out activities (with an accompanying extended timeline) that lay the groundwork both for having a licensing and inspection system to cover all programs and for requiring participation of all programs - such as developing a crosswalk of the TQRIS and other program standards; however, these activities fall short of fully meeting the two criteria.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	0 or 10	No
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
<b>Comments on (P)(3)</b>		
<p>The state did not meet this priority through either (a) or (b). First, the state is NOT already implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment for criterion (a). Second, the state did not earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for criterion (E)(1) [i.e., 12 out of 20 points were awarded] to meet criterion (b). Therefore, this competitive preference priority is not met.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
<b>Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.</b>	Yes
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	

#### Comments on Absolute Priority

In total, the application has done an adequate job of articulating how it will meet the absolute priority of promoting school readiness for children with high needs. The key goals and activities that comprise the state's plan reflect an emphasis on data management and data dissemination as a mechanism for promoting school readiness. The proposal justifies this emphasis because the state has a strong record of supporting early learning and development. That is, the movement toward more advanced data systems is warranted in the application as a next step in advancing the state's commitment and agenda for promoting school readiness. AS such, this absolute priority has been met.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # PA-5031

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/17/2011 - 6:55 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 19. Includes detailed text description of the state's early learning system and investment history.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comment on (A)(1)

The application for the state of Pennsylvania demonstrates a longstanding and strong commitment to the development and implementation of a high-quality early learning system. Appendix (A) (1) provides a sketch of the highlights of the state's history since 2000 in all the major areas to be addressed by this competition. By 2007, Pennsylvania had established the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) which spans the Departments of Education and Public Welfare to administer all of the state-funded and state-administered early learning and development programs.

for 30,980 to 32,982; children in programs receiving CCDF funds went from 144,639 to 169,064, but this number may be an overestimate of high needs children served because it counts all children served in programs in the Keystone Stars program. The state preK program also serves children up to 300% of the poverty level, so an unknown number of the 11,359 children in Table A-1-3 are above the 200% high needs threshold (but this is less than 1% of the total population of all high needs children served in programs shown in Table A-1-3). There were increasing numbers of children served in the state's home visiting programs through 2010, with a drop in 2011 by over 2,500 children. Pennsylvania has a strong and comprehensive set of policies and practices already in place that demonstrate its commitment to early childhood. The application describes 9 major programs that each have specific policies that promote access for high needs children and their families and promote program quality through standards for how programs operate, the personnel who work in the programs (including their training and ongoing professional development (PD) and credentialing), and expectations for promoting children's school readiness and well being, including how parents are involved, supported and encouraged to support their children's early learning and school readiness. The entire application describes the many ways that Pennsylvania plans to further integrate and align resources and policies across state agencies to improve, expand, and refine all the main features of the state's early learning system (addressed in sections B, C, D, and E of the application, and reviewed for each area). To date, Pennsylvania has established a strong foundation and made considerable progress in all of the key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system that are requirements for this competition. Pennsylvania has a long history of thinking and working systemically and strategically about its early learning system, working collaboratively with many types of stakeholders, with many successes in designing and implementing and putting in place processes for sustainability (see history of activities in Appendix showing highlights since 2000). Already in place are many types of early learning programs that serve high needs children and their families, a well designed set of early learning standards for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers (as well as kindergarteners and 1st and 2nd graders) that show a progression of skills across the early childhood age range and cover the 5 essential domains of schools readiness, a nearly 10-year old tiered quality rating and improvement system, the Keystone Start program, used to rate, monitor, and support the quality of early learning programs across the entire state, a broad and comprehensive early childhood professional development framework that supports a career development system for early childhood providers and program directors and administrators (with many types of training and technical assistance (TA) supports), a well developed statewide early childhood data system that the state uses regularly to analyze and use data to understand the current status of various features of the state early learning system and plan for future activities and improvement strategies. There is not statewide kindergarten entry assessment, but the state has begun a pilot of one this year and has chosen this area for one of its focused investment areas, with a strong plan for having one in place statewide by 2016. Pennsylvania is clearly a national leader in using data for planning and strategic decision making about all parts of the early learning system (e.g., using Keystone Start program data to develop continuous improvement plans for program to use to upgrade their quality, with technical assistance specialists provided to help programs). Data are presented in the application to show that programs have been steadily improving their quality over the past 10 years (i.e., more programs with high star ratings, more programs with higher ratings of quality on the standard observation quality tool, the Environmental rating Scales). The state also has conducted many independent evaluations and studies to learn how things are working and make plans for improvements (e.g., studies of start ratings relationships to child outcomes; studies of relationships between technical assistance provided to early learning programs and whether programs increase their star quality ratings).

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable; builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

- (a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;
- (b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and
- (c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(2)**

The reform agenda outlined in Pennsylvania's application is a well thought out, strategic plan that builds on and expands the solid foundation of early learning system components that Pennsylvania has developed over the past decade (early learning standards, comprehensive assessment systems, health promotion practices, strategies for family engagement, development of the early childhood workforce, development of an effective data system, and a new pilot of a kindergarten entry assessment). For each core area and focused investment area described in the application, the state has clearly identified the current status in the area and then has articulated the gaps and rationale for the proposed strategies and activities the state wants to pursue over the next several years to make continuing progress in serving high needs children, improving program quality and thereby improving children's school readiness outcomes. The application contains a clear table summarizing the reform agenda components that address all the requirements. In each section, they present a detailed table with the planned activities, dates for a timeline, and which partners and key personnel will be involved in each specific activity. The summary is a

thorough list of specific and achievable activities and goals, all in the support of getting better child outcomes for high needs children to prepare them for success in school and life. The Focused Investment Areas that Pennsylvania has chosen are exactly the right areas they need to work on, ones that are not as well developed as they can be, areas that can move from good or very good to excellent with the support for this grant. The entire application shows that the state has been very intentional and planful in its approach to building a comprehensive and high-quality early learning system for over a decade, and they have been working statewide on all aspects of their system. Furthermore, they have been using a broad collaborative approach with many stakeholders so that policies and practices that are implemented stand a good chance of being adopted and well implemented. The state has identified 3 broad goals to improve program quality and outcomes and close the readiness gap (1)increase access of high needs children to high-quality programs, and engage families in early learning, and increase early educators ability to identify developmental delays; (2)further develop a high-quality integrated early learning data system with the purpose of maximizing use of data for program improvement purposes; and (3)improve high needs' children's outcomes by making improvements in the quality of the workforce, use of early learning standards, and child outcomes reporting. In addition, in the appendices, the application contains clearly articulated high-quality logic models for each core area and focused investment area that can serve as blueprints for the state's planned activities and progress made throughout the implementation of the grant. These logic models are impressive in their scope, they show a great deal of careful thought about how different activities will lead to specific tangible and important improvements, and they show both short-term and long-term benchmarks to give the state a handle on how well they are moving in the right direction. For instance, for development of a great workforce, the state notes that they do not have data to understand the status of the workforce and they do not have enough professional development to address infants and toddlers. Then the proposed reform activities have been crafted to address those gaps and challenges (described and evaluated in section C). For this logic model, however, the final outcomes are not linked specifically to improved child outcomes in enough detail. As another example, there is no kindergarten entry assessment in place to date, but the reform agenda activities show a clear plan, with specific action steps in a logical order, for moving ahead and getting this component firmly implemented statewide by 2016. As described in E1, however, the pilot in place this last year is a very minimal implementation, and the proposed budget for this component does not appear to be adequate to do all the work required to have a common statewide implementation by 2015. With a few small exceptions, the budget is also well thought out, with the proposed allocation of money matching the planned activities. In summary, Pennsylvania's application shows that this state has been thinking deeply about all of the areas addressed in this competition (attested to by its narrative and the many well developed documents contained in appendices), has made steady progress over the past decade (also seen in many of the appendices' documents), and knows where it needs to go to continue making progress (because the application contains much evidence that the state is always thinking systemically and strategically and statewide about their early childhood system).

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--</p> <p>(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;</p> <p>(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;</p> <p>(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and</p> <p>(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant.</p> <p>(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--</p> <p>(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;</p> <p>(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and</p> <p>(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and</p>		



(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

**Scoring Rubric Used: Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (A)(3)**

It is abundantly clear from Pennsylvania's application that for the past decade or longer the state has been and continues to think and plan about its early childhood system strategically and systemically. Further, there is strong agency and stakeholder support for the work proposed in the application (appropriate letters of support and Memoranda of Understanding, with specific scopes of work are provided; bipartisan, bicameral support for the Pennsylvania legislature, including by the Governor, both Secretaries of Education and Public Welfare, members of the General Assembly's bipartisan Early Childhood Education Caucus, representatives from state early childhood professional organizations and programs, business leaders, three foundations, school districts, higher education institutions, parent support and advocacy groups, and child outcomes reporting companies). Missing (or perhaps not clearly labeled) are letters of support from representative of the Local Education and Resource Networks (LEARN), critical partners for the parent engagement activities (Focused Investment C4). The state has a strong governance structure. In 2007, Pennsylvania established the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) which spans the Departments of Education and Public Welfare to administer the state's early learning and development programs and OCDEL will serve as the lead agency. This is an excellent choice because this dual deputation of the Departments of Education and Public Welfare (OCDEL is an office within both of these departments) has been collaboratively leading Pennsylvania's early childhood system development and oversees nearly all of the early childhood programs and policies in the state, with regular communication about the state's vision and plans for the early learning system and policies. The state Department of Health will also be a partner, as will the state's well functioning 50-member Early Learning Council (ELC), the 50-member State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) (overseeing early intervention in the state), and the Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC), a group of business leaders from across the state. All of these partners worked on, reviewed, or gave input to the state's application, attesting to the collaborative and inclusive relationships in this state. Led by OCDEL, the above three councils (ELC, SICC, ELIC) will also be involved throughout the grant period, with regular reports about the grant progress and activities given at their regular meetings and input and recommendations being sought by the OCDEL leaders. Due to Pennsylvania's structure and past history of working together, the activities of the grant can proceed efficiently within a well functioning governance structure already in place. This is a major positive feature of Pennsylvania's application. The application lays out clearly and convincingly the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency and all partners, with their respective scopes of work, tasks, and activities laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by each participating agency or partner. For each MOU, a table is provided that identifies the specific selection criteria from the application that the participating party is agreeing to, with specific tasks described in a Statement of Work section of the table. For instance, the ELC has 8 subcommittees (e.g., Parent Advisory Council; Keystone STARS; Early Learning Career Preparation and Development) that work on specific topics that are related to work in the application. They will be called on to review plans and activities, provide input and make recommendations, and lend support to many of the proposed grant activities (e.g., use of assessment systems or kindergarten entry assessment) The SICC deals with programs for young children with disabilities and will be a critical partner for making sure the needs of this group of high needs children are included appropriately. Letters of support from the key required early learning intermediary organizations are all included in the application.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

(1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;

(2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of

the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and

(3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(4)**

In its application, Pennsylvania is requesting a total of \$65,305,108 for the 4 years of the grant. The state is investing funds totaling \$40,935,715 from other sources to support the state's early learning activities (for a total of \$106,240,823 for all the funds combined). About 72% of the requested funds are allocated under "Contractual", and are distributed across years with about 15% in Year 1, 36% in Year 2, 33% in Year 3, and 16% in Year 4. A little over \$16 million has been allocated to Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, participating programs and other partners (about 25% of the total funding). The entire \$106 million budget is shown in Budget Table 1-2. Budget Table 1-3 shows how the funds for the 8 projects identified in the narrative are to be distributed. The amounts for each project, appropriately mapped on to the specific core areas or focused investment areas described in the application narrative, seem to be adequate and reasonable to carry out the proposed work, and are well matched to the proposed activities in the narrative (with the exception of the "Keystone Framework" described below). For instance, many activities relate to expanding the Keystone Stars program, which is budgeted at about 35% of the total funds, with the next highest amount of funding devoted to development of workforce effectiveness (about 25% of the total funds), followed by activities to develop the data system and reporting functions (e.g., activities describe under C4 and E2, such as the Early Learning Community Scorecard, the provider dashboard and management tool). Also appropriate amounts have been allocated for the "promoting child outcomes" area (e.g., activities identified in C1 and C2, such as developing and implementing online training modules for parents and early educators about the early learning child outcomes; aligning and embedding the early learning standards in to the statewide portal [Standards Aligned System (SAS)] used by K12). For the kindergarten entry assessment (described in section E1), that falls under the project entitled "Keystone Framework", the proposed budget appears to be inadequate because the state is nearly starting from scratch. That is, only a minimal pilot is just now in place this school year; the budget calls for a total of \$1.9 million for all 4 years (see Table Budget II-2); only \$100,000 and \$180,00 budgeted in years 1 and 2, respectively, for the quite extensive development work; and there is no indication of costs for full implementation in year 4. The state suggests that a common assessment will be fully implemented statewide by 2015 which just does not seem possible. As a further point of confusion, there is a section that states that over \$3.8 million from the State Longitudinal Data Systems grant will be allocated for the kindergarten entry assessment work in Fiscal Year 2013 (Table A-4-a). This looks like significant funds of development work and data system work. However, given the timeline for full implementation statewide, it is not clear that this amount is needed this early in the grant for this project. Furthermore, the full implementation in fall of 2014 seems to need more funds than have been allocated for that point in time. Taken together, the explanation of the activities and budget for the kindergarten entry assessment is not as clear as it could be and raises questions about its adequacy to implement the plans. It is also worth noting that the state also suggests that the budget for the use of authentic assessments across early learning programs "...assumes that providers will cover 100% of the costs in 5 years.", which seems very unrealistic and unreasonable. Pennsylvania has received financial support in the past from 3 foundations that have given OCDEL assurances that they will continue to provide funds for various projects that develop out of this competition, should Pennsylvania receive RTTT-ELC funding. Such funds can help with longer term sustainability, and the foundations past relationships with OCDEL attest to their commitment to the state's early learning agenda.

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	10	8
<p>The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--</p> <p>(a) Is based on a statewide set of Tiered Program Standards that include--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Early Learning and Development Standards;</li> <li>(2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;</li> <li>(3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;</li> <li>(4) Family engagement strategies;</li> <li>(5) Health promotion practices; and</li> <li>(6) Effective data practices;</li> </ul>		

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(1)**

Pennsylvania began its Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS), known as the Keystone Stars program in 2002, well ahead of most other states, showing a strong commitment to supporting quality in its early learning programs. The Keystone Stars program is a well designed and widely implemented TQRIS: it has standards for centers, group homes, and family child care homes, is aligned with the state early learning standards in that program must have curriculum and child assessment tools that are aligned with the standards and are used to plan activities for children's learning and development, and has 4 main areas that are evidence-based practices with specific indicators that are appropriate measures of program quality (i.e., Staff Qualifications and Professional Development; Learning Program; Family and Community Partnerships; Leadership and Management). There are 4 levels of quality that are meaningfully distinguished from lower to higher levels of quality, and the quality indicators include all six program standards (i.e., early learning standards for children; assessment; early educator qualifications and training requirements; strategies for family engagement; health promotion practices; and effective uses of data). The application outlines in detail how the 4 levels indicate increasingly higher levels of program quality. For example, data are presented in the application to indicate that Environmental Rating Scale scores steadily increase with increasing numbers of stars (i.e., average of 3.9 for star 1, 4.7 for star 2, 5.3 for star 3, and 5.6 for star 4, with an average of 5.9 for PreK Counts programs statewide). The application also presents data that shows that children in star level 3 and 4 programs show good gains in skills between fall and spring of the school year (based on the most recent data for 2010-2011). For each area in the system, the state also has a set of incentives and supports to help program attain higher levels of quality. For instance, for staff qualifications, there are financial incentives for staff to work towards their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Programs must meet basic licensing requirements and if they are out of compliance, the stars are suspended until they are back in compliance. It is not clear from the application what happens to programs that were in the system and fall out of compliance. This omission in the narrative makes it hard to know how the state tries to get them back into the TQRIS and what kinds of supports they use to assist them in those efforts. Since these are exactly the kinds of programs that need to improve their quality, this is an important omission. Programs are reevaluated every 2 years, but the state proposes to modify this recertification to match federal reporting schedules which is a good idea for reducing duplication of efforts. Individuals who evaluate and monitor the programs are well trained, with detailed reliability check used to insure interrater reliability of the evaluations of programs. For each of the 4 areas in the system, data are collected and a variety of evaluations have been conducted to determine how well the program features are working. For instance, the partnerships with families and communities, surveys of parents have been done in 2010 (those in 3 and 4 star programs) and indicate that 96% of parents are satisfied with their child's program quality. As another example, at the higher Star ratings, programs have to enter program assessment and child outcome data into the state data system and it is expected that programs use data to improve instruction (although the application does not state explicitly how this is achieved).

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(2)**

Pennsylvania has intentionally developed focused strategies and incentives to promote participation in the Keystone Stars program across the entire state. Participation is voluntary, but the state has financial incentives to encourage early learning program staff to earn their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, with merit awards offered for professional development and course work completion. The state also has a large variety of professional development trainings for providers to increase their knowledge and skills with regard to the many program standards (e.g., health promotion, nutrition and safety, child observation and assessment, early learning standards, inclusion and children with special needs, strategies for promoting parent engagement). Technical assistance is also provided to programs by a set of regional specialists who also have branding materials that lets programs advertise their star rating. Currently, participation rates are somewhat low and vary by early learning program type (Table B-2-3). Only about half of state-prekindergarten programs (47.2%) and those receiving CCDF funds (50%), and a mere 11.7% of Early Head Start and Head Start programs are participating in the Keystone Stars program, all the kinds of programs that serve predominantly high need children. The goal to increase participation to 56% by 2016 for programs receiving CCDF funds (serving a huge proportion of high needs children) seems minimally ambitious. Why this is the goal for this type of program is not explained in the application, but it suggests that the incentives for participation are not adequate or valued by programs. Of greater concern, currently, none of the preschool special education (IDEA, Part B, section 619 programs) and programs receiving Title 1 funds are participating in the Keystone Stars program. The state tracks participation in a data system and has set annual targets to increase the number of participating programs. Given the length of time that the Keystone Stars program has been implemented across the state, these participation rates seem somewhat low, and the application does not offer much information about why this is so. The application also states that financial incentives are provided to programs to include high needs children, but the low participation rates in this voluntary statewide TQRIS suggests that the incentives may not be effective enough to promote participation. Unlike other parts the application that used data to make a point, there are no data presented to show how incentives facilitate participation of programs, increase numbers of high needs children in top-tier programs, and/or engage in activities that lead to higher star ratings. The application identified several gaps that they want to address in the coming years, all of which are significant and appropriate needs that should expand participation. For instance, they state that not all programs are tracked in the PELICAN data system, particularly Head Start programs (not regulated by OCDEL). As with most other states, Pennsylvania has found it difficult to include non-regulated program in the system. The application is weak on details about how the state will improve this situation. The application provides a specific set of goals to increase participation in the Keystone Stars program, focusing efforts on those programs that serve high needs children (i.e., school-based preK programs, including those funded locally or with Title 1 or those that do not also provide child care, early intervention programs funded for preschoolers through section 619 of IDEA, and private licensed nursery schools). It is proposed to crosswalk program standards for these programs to help them develop plans to enter the Keystone Stars program, and to provide them with professional development to use the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) to conduct self assessments of their quality. These are excellent strategies to encourage participation and increase awareness about quality indicators by early learning program staff. Plans to include Head Start programs have been well thought out; they include using Head Start standards and requirements (e.g., submitting their scores on the CLASS and ERS measures that they would be normally be collecting during their federal reviews).

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

- (a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and
- (b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

Pennsylvania has a very well functioning system in place to rate and monitor early learning programs, based on over 10 years of experience implementing their Keystone Stars program. The rating and monitoring process includes review of documents, staff interviews, and observations using well validated tools [Environmental Rating Scales (ERS)] by trained and certified assessors. Program must renew their designations annually, an important feature of the system that assures continuing attention to program quality. Programs also receive reports about their rating findings and they develop improvement plans, and can receive technical assistance to work towards the identified improvement needs. All of these features of the Keystone Stars program show that the system is high quality, with considerable attention the processes to rate, monitor, and assist programs in their participation and in their efforts to improve their quality. For example, a detailed set of activities have been put into place to assure that the observers (referred to as STARS Designators) are experienced and reliable; they have initial training, and periodic reliability checks are done throughout the year to make sure they stay reliable in their

observations of programs. There is some mention of using the CLASS measures in the future – this is a better measure of teaching interactions that have been shown to promote positive child learning and outcomes; but the application does not develop any strong plans to support its use more widely (stated that the state “encourages Head Start classrooms to use the CLASS...”). They state that they are piloting the use of the CLASS in a 2009-10 study, and “intend to implement the CLASS as a supplemental assessment statewide in the future.” Pennsylvania also has paid attention to getting information about the Keystone Stars program to parents and communities. The state has a web site (COMPASS) that gives parents information about the star ratings and licensing of programs. Star information is also available to parents through the child care resource and referrals agencies in local communities. One concern is how these kinds of dissemination strategies work for families with high needs children (use of Internet) and no data are presented in the application to show that these are well used sources of information for these families. The state’s plans for moving forward include maintaining the current program and expanding it more fully across the entire state with additional types of programs described in section B3. Currently, family child care providers are not included in the database, and the state plans to expand their inclusion in the Keystone Stars program. But there are few details on how this will be accomplished, an important omission. Another more significant concern is that current participation rates and numbers with the top tiers are rather low, and the application does not adequately address plans for adding other supports or incentives, especially for programs with 1 or 2 stars to increase their star levels. This is very important because these are the very programs where most of the high needs children are in attendance. The state is addressing needs of star 1 and 2 programs with TA, which does seem to be helping (as evidenced by a research brief shown in Appendix B-4-7 showing that star 1 programs benefited the most from TA).

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

The well established statewide Keystone Stars program aims to promote high-quality early learning programs for high needs children, and already has in place a number of policies and practices that help programs improve their quality. The incentives and resources include training (professional development, technical assistance (TA), financial awards and incentives, and child care subsidy add-ons for high-quality STAR programs. Each of these areas is described in detail in the application, and all of them are strong effective approaches to help staff and programs understand what quality is and aid them in their efforts to improve the quality of their programs. For instance, the state has a statewide professional development system for early childhood providers with a clearly articulated framework with pathways to certification, with a professional development refund voucher programs to help pay for providers college courses and other training. Similarly, the state OCDEL has developed a system of technical assistance (TA) supports that are strong and appropriate. One particularly impressive feature of the TA system is that the state has identified a set of core competencies that TA and professional development consultant must have, thus promoting high quality in the TA and training that is being conducted across the state. Other types of specific TA available are also significant: TA for infant/toddler programs on several evidence based models that promote child development [e.g., Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) and Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)]; and TA on the use of the CSEFEL model for preschool teachers and parents of preschoolers to address social-emotional needs of high needs children. Like all parts of Pennsylvania’s early learning system that includes using data for improvement purposes, evaluation studies have been conducted to see if the TA is making a difference. For instance, a 2009-2010 study found that the TA is helping programs move up in their stars [i.e., more of those who had TA (50.5%) moved up at least one star level than did those who did not use TA (32.2%)]. This shows Pennsylvania’s commitment to using data for continuous improvement of its training and TA. The state also has developed a TA accountability plan (appendix B-4-3) that is an impressive blueprint that TA consultants and program directors and other staff can use to develop program improvement plans and then monitor their progress, complete with suggested specific measurable benchmarks to show how TA is supporting programs with such components as increasing their start ratings and increasing levels of qualifications of program staff. The data in Tables B-4-c-1 and B-4-c-2 show that the current numbers of programs in high-quality programs and high needs children in them are pretty low and in need of substantial improvements and increases. For instance, less than half of those high needs children in state preK programs (44.3%) are in top-tier programs, and the numbers for the IDEA programs serving children with disabilities are very

low (around 4-5%). Overall, the state projects moving from 991 programs with 3 or 4 stars currently to 1,685 with 3 or 4 stars in 2016, an increase of 694 programs which is a 70% increase. This is an ambitious goal. To assist parents of high needs children in accessing high-quality programs, the state has a comprehensive resource and referral system, with a comprehensive online provider search service called COMPASS. The application describes how parents of children with special needs are assisted to access high-quality early learning programs: programs in the Keystone Stars program can receive training and TA on inclusion strategies and positive behavior supports that help program staff effectively include these children in their programs (for instance, in 2009-10, the state offered over 125 workshops on these topics; and 70% of preschool age children eligible for special education services received their services in typical settings). These recent improvements attest to the state's strong commitment to increasing access to high-quality programs for these children. Pennsylvania has a high-quality plan for continuing and expanding access to high-quality programs for high needs children which acknowledges that many of the programs used by these children need more intensive supports to move up in the number of stars they have (e.g., family child care providers; subsidized child care centers). The application describes two projects to meet this goal, a coaching project for center-based programs and a mentoring program for family child care providers, and sets out numbers and percentages of different program types that will have the high start ratings (3 and 4) by the end of the grant in 2016. The numbers are reasonable and achievable based on the state's earlier data showing an annual 2.5% to 3% in the number of programs at the 3 and 4 star levels. An appendix (B-4-5) does a nice job of laying out the preliminary plan for these two new projects. The state also plans to conduct a cluster-randomized design study of the two projects to learn more about the effectiveness of these approaches to increase participation and quality movement, once again an indication of the state's strong commitment to collecting and using data to improve the entire early learning system and all of its components.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (B)(5)

Pennsylvania has a strong commitment to evaluating all aspects of its early learning system and using the resulting data to inform policy development and practices, make changes as needed, allocate resources, all in the service of promoting high-quality programming and increasing access for high needs children. The state has already conducted (or commissioned) multiple evaluations and studies of the Keystone Stars program, including participation in 2 national studies of TQRISs funded by the federal Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation of the Administration for Children and Families (OPRE-ACF). Independent evaluations of the Keystone Stars program have been conducted by national known, well respected early childhood researchers at the University of Pittsburgh in 2003, 2004, and 2006. These studies have shown positive results about program quality and child outcomes related to program quality, how well the system works, including that the training and technical assistance (TA) supports do predict quality, and what kinds of improvements should be made to the Keystone Stars program. The state is just beginning to look at whether or not to begin widespread use of the CLASS measure (an observational program quality measure about the quality of teacher-child interactions), beginning in 2010 with a statewide pilot study of the CLASS to study its use as another tool to promote program quality. This work is ongoing and also aims to do a cost-benefit analysis of the use of the CLASS (implemented with either a sample of programs or statewide). The description of the plans for use of the CLASS are somewhat vague, and the validation of the state's TQRIS would be much improved if they would develop this plan more fully because the adult-child teaching interactions are important evidence-based factors that influence children's learning and school readiness skills. While 70% of programs participate statewide in the Keystone Stars program (about 170,000 children), Pennsylvania does not have enough data about how program quality relates to child outcomes (a problem across all other states as well). With grant funds, the state plans to design and conduct a study or studies to examine links between program quality and child outcomes. The application sketches out a reasonable and achievable preliminary plan that would involve an independent external evaluator and use of national experts, including mining information already available from the national quality initiatives funded by the federal Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation of the Administration for Children and Families (OPRE-ACF). The state already collects child outcomes data for the top 2 star levels, and proposes to expand the child outcomes data collection with a random sample of children in the lower star programs. This represents a well thought out plan that will contribute to Pennsylvania's knowledge and well as contribute to the field nationally.

**Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application--

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C);
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E)

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--

- (a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;
- (c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and
- (d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(1)**

Pennsylvania has an excellent set of early learning standards for both infants/toddlers and for preschoolers, but also sets for kindergarteners, and for 1st and 2nd graders (shown in appendices). They cover all the major areas of child development (essential elements of school readiness), address diversity with regard to culture and English learners (state has a set that are in Spanish – the state's largest groups of English learners), are (perhaps) aligned with the early grades of the K12 system (based on an initial alignment study done by Drs. Sharon Kagan and Catherine Scott-Little, national experts on early learning standards and progressions). One concern that can be raised with the standards is that many parents and early childhood providers may be confused by categorizing skills in the infant and toddler range with more academic terms that would not seem appropriate for infants and toddlers. That is, in an effort to demonstrate alignment with standards for older children, including K12 types of standards, Pennsylvania uses the same categories for skills beginning at birth, e.g., Social Studies Thinking: Connecting to Communities, with specific standards for such skills as "Work and Earnings", "Historical Analysis and Skills Development", and "Principles and Documents of Government". For some of the individual standards, only the word 'emerging' is shown for infants and toddlers. For other standards, skills are described for infants and toddlers that are appropriate behaviors for this age group. However, the average person would not think of the skills as indications of the standard to which they match (e.g., for the standard "Principles and Documents of Government", the behaviors listed have to do with acceptable behaviors and following rules - for toddlers "understanding one word rules such as 'no' or 'stop'"). While for many of the specific standards, only the word "emerging" is shown for infants or toddlers, using older age concepts to describe infant and toddler skills may be off-putting to the very parents and providers that the state want to understand and use these standards (i.e., some will see the language used in the standards as pushing academic K12 expectations onto very young children). Individuals who provide training and technical assistance to early childhood providers must be certified by the state's Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System, and it includes having knowledge about the early learning standards as well as linking standards, assessment, and curriculum. All of these features are top-notch characteristics of Pennsylvania's early learning standards and how they are used. Pennsylvania's ambitious and achievable plan for this area is to continue to refine the standards they already have, refine a preK to 2nd grade curriculum framework linked to the standards, and create professional development modules on the standards and curriculum. The state has a K12 Standards Aligned Systems Portal (SAS) that is a repository about 6 elements about quality education: clear standards; fair assessments; curriculum framework; instruction; materials and resources; and interventions. What the plan would do is to build the early childhood part of this standards

repository, which currently is not in place. This feature of Pennsylvania is an excellent approach that fits nicely with the preschool to 3rd grade movement that is gaining across the country. There is a problem in the terminology and language used to explain the standards to the intended end-users (e.g., parents, early childhood educators, providers, home visitors, etc.) who may rightly see the use of more academic terms used with older children as developmentally inappropriate when used for very young children.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.</b>	20	15

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--

(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;

(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;

(c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and

(d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (C)(2)

Pennsylvania currently has in place all the elements of a comprehensive early learning assessment system, each of which need continuing work to have them fully implemented and of high quality across the state. Appropriate program quality measures, indicators, and licensing requirements are included in the state's TQRIS (described fully under core area B), and child authentic assessments are part of the required components of the system. The state currently does not have a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment, but they have identified it as a need addressed more fully in Focused Investment Area E1. The state also has an early childhood credentialing system in place to build and sustain a high-quality workforce that appears to be of high quality, with supporting training and technical assistance (TA) for providers already in the workforce and higher education requirements defined (although the state does not know a lot about what all their higher education institutions are really implementing in their early childhood training programs – see section D1 for more information). The state identified as a gap that fact that many early childhood providers really do not have "deep knowledge and understanding of children's developmental progress to be able to adapt their instruction effectively to children's diverse skill levels and learning needs." The other identified gap is the limited use of data by providers (at individual child, classroom, and program levels) to understand children's diverse and individual skills, competencies, and needs, to inform instruction by providers, and to examine program quality at the classroom and program levels in order to make needed improvements. The state has developed a preliminary list of 10 specific training modules about outcomes it would like to develop with grant funds. The list is well conceived, is set in a broad context (beginning with Introduction to the Keystone Child Outcomes Framework (KCOF), and include both child and program assessment topics), and covers the many important topics about assessment that providers need to know (e.g., cultural and linguistic diversity issues; factors for selection of tools; why it is important to assess program quality). The plans to address these gaps are high quality and represent sensible goals for this area of the grant. One problem with the plan for the development of the Keystone Child Outcomes Framework kindergarten assessment is that the timeline shown in a table in this section is unrealistic. That is, the table shows that by spring 2012 (within the first quarter of the first year of the grant), the state will "select assessments to be used in the KCOF" including to "develop criteria upon which assessments would be selected" and "evaluate instruments for consideration...", and "convene a stakeholder process to approve assessments for 0-5". This is a set of many complicated tasks that simply cannot be completed in such a short period of time, given that the state is also planning to simultaneously "review the content of the Child Outcome Framework and conduct an alignment analysis to ensure the framework is aligned with the standards at all age levels". With regard to child assessment, the application describes how the state will partner with Pennsylvania's American Academy of Pediatrics to increase health care providers' knowledge of and use of periodic developmental screening and work to refer children in need of early intervention and preschool special education service. The grant funds will be used to develop and then implement 100 training sessions across the state in each of the 3 years of this project. This is a clear need for the state, as it appears to be for all states. Their plan looks promising and feasible to implement successfully. While Pennsylvania has made great strides in data systems development, they stated a need to make the system more cohesive and coordinated. They propose to have a "Keystone Child Outcomes Framework" so that there is a set of common child assessment tools and procedures and hence child outcomes data across all the types of early learning programs in the state (see also E2 about coordinating data across programs). Like most states, Pennsylvania has in place recommended practices for early learning with regards to child assessment for monitoring children's development and using the information to plan instruction and interventions, but what is actually happening at the program site level and statewide is really not known very well by state level administrators. The status of duplication of assessments and, most likely, lack of sharing of assessment results when high needs children are served in more than one early learning program, is also unknown (although this is a common occurrence in many other states as well).



	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	20	17

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

- (a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;
- (b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and
- (c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (C)(4)

Pennsylvania's application acknowledges the significant role that families play in young children learning, development and well being, and described a number of its past and current activities that support family engagement. The application clearly demonstrates that Pennsylvania's early learning system is strongly committed to supporting and educating families so they can support their young children. Thus, the state plans to build and expand its documented successes in working the families of young children. Among them are: one core area in the Keystone Stars program (the TQRIS) is "Partnerships with Families and Communities" showing that engagement with families is central to how program quality is viewed; the state has developed a series of 5 user-friendly documents that explain the early learning standards to parents and give suggested home activities for parents to do with their children, in English and Spanish (the two most common languages in Pennsylvania); state child care licensing regulations require parent communication and that parents receive a report (twice per year) detailing the child's strengths, next developmental milestones and suggestions about what parents can do at home to promote the child's learning and development; there is a Parent Advisory Committee as part of the state's Early Learning Council, assuring that parent voices are included in deliberations and planning and decision making at the state level of the early learning system; active parent participation in Local Education and Resource Networks (LEARN) all across the state, local grassroots collaboratives, which support parent engagement and involvement in decision making at the local level; the state funds and supports several evidence-based home visiting programs for families with young children (i.e., Early Head Start, Nurse Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, Healthy Families America, Parent-Child Home Program); since 2006, the state has used the Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework as a model for providers to use to think about their work with families (but not well described in the application); and local resource and referral agencies offer a wide variety of information to families about both early learning programs and early learning per se, much of which is also available online. The appendices that contained letters of support from a broad range of stakeholders did not contain letters from representatives from the Local Education and Resource Networks (LEARN. This seems to be an important omission since these are the local organizations that are important players in parent engagement activities. The lack of such letters raises questions about how central and collaborative the local networks are with the agenda being put forth by the state. Compared to other features of Pennsylvania's early learning system, the application did not seem as strong in this area of family engagement, particularly with families with high needs children. As such, the state wants to strengthen and coordinate many of the grassroots efforts at the local levels to promote more and better parent engagement particularly in areas of the state with high need children. To that end, OCDEL would like to develop and implement a Family Engagement Project. As described in the application, the plan would be to convene local teams to design "a statewide family engagement strategy" which would be based on the early learning standards, the program quality standards, and the Strengthening Families Framework. More details about what is seen as "family engagement" is not really spelled out fully in the application. Inclusion of letters of support from parents of children with high needs might have helped to demonstrate parent involvement in the family engagement agenda. The application did contain many support letters from the organizations and providers who work with high needs children and their families, however. The state's plan for this area also includes a plan to develop an Early Learning GPS (Guiding Parents Smoothly) web-based tool for parent to access information about children's early learning and early learning programs and a web-based Community Scorecard which will contain the kinds of information on many county scorecards (e.g., community level risk factor percentages; size and diversity of the child population; availability of early learning programs). It will also include the aggregate child assessment and outcome data from birth to 3rd grade for the community. Another planned strategy is to expand 2 early reading programs that distribute books to families (as well as to early learning programs), One Book Every Young Child Campaign and Reach Out and Read. These are all great strategies for promoting family engagement in children's early learning and programs, and also in educating the general public about early learning, garnering public support for early learning activities and investments.

#### D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

*The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.*

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--

- (a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;
- (b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and
- (c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (D)(1)**

Pennsylvania's application clearly outlines the critical importance of a well qualified early childhood work force for promoting young children's school readiness, particularly for children with high needs. The state realized how important it would be to build a high-quality professional development system for all of its early learning programs when it first began work on its TQRIS around 2001. This is another area for which Pennsylvania has been thinking and planning systemically: there is a framework that outlines multiple aspects of the professional development system, including: vision and guiding principles; core knowledge; access and outreach; qualifications, credentials and career pathways (with 8 levels of growth); and funding. The state has identified common core content credits to determine placement on the Career Lattice to be used statewide. Stakeholder groups have been convened in developing and refining the framework and its components, including early childhood professionals and educators from higher education institutions across the state. All of these features of the system are appropriate and necessary. The state does currently have a comprehensive career development system, with a workforce knowledge and competency framework that is called the Core Body of Knowledge or CBK that provides details about what educators need to know and do to promote children's learning and improve child outcomes (also with input from higher education representatives). The framework identified 7 areas, all of which are exactly appropriate domains of knowledge that early care and education providers should know about [e.g., (1) Child Growth and Development, (2) Curriculum and Learning Experiences; (3) Child Assessment; (4) Families, Schools, and Community Collaboration and Partnerships; (5) Communication; (6) Professionalism and Leadership; and (7) Health, Safety, and Nutrition), with an eighth area of skills for administrators and program directors. The CBK is evidence-based and aligns with standards set by nationally recognized early childhood organizations (e.g., National Association for the Education of Young Children; Head Start Performance Standards; and National Council for Professional Recognition Child Development Associate Credential Standards) as well as Pennsylvania's standards. There are skill levels from entry-level to Master-level for each professional role (e.g., teacher, director). The Pennsylvania Keys to Professional Development is a comprehensive career development system that align with the CBK, and is based on the well respected National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance (NCCIC) Early Childhood Professional Development System Framework and another framework from the National Professional Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) (relating to children with disabilities and other special needs). There is a cross systems workgroup that has been and still is working on cross-systems professional development (includes representations from Head Start, Early head Start, early intervention, higher education, public schools, and OCDEL). This is an excellent framework for the early learning professional development (PD) system. Despite this kind of progress, the state identified several gaps it would like to address. First, the application stated that there are still many providers and policymakers who do not understand the importance of a highly qualified early childhood workforce to get the good child outcomes to promote school readiness that are being sought. While currently there are three databases with information about the workforce, there is no way to get a unified picture of the workforce. The state is proposing to create enhancements to these three databases so there will be one workforce and professional development registry. This new development will allow OCDEL to conduct better data analysis about workforce issues to guide their future planning and policy work. Second, currently Pennsylvania does not have an infant/toddler credential. This is a serious problem and a significant omission is the state's early learning work to date. Given all of the efforts that have been put into the development of a comprehensive early learning system in Pennsylvania, it is somewhat puzzling as to why the state has not made progress on this critically important group of the birth to age 3 population. To correct this gap, the state is proposing to use grant funds to develop a set of specialization criteria for infant/toddler specialists that spell out a clearcut career pathway. Third, the state feels that it has not worked closely and effectively enough with the state institutions of higher learning to advance its early learning systems work. To that end, the state proposes to develop partnerships with postsecondary institutions to promote its professional development agenda. The application describes several promising and innovative approaches [e.g., align courses with the CBK; develop and implement additional career- advising strategies to help grow the future early childhood workforce for Pennsylvania; move the instructor-led, in-person module content to an asynchronous online platform offering credit, and expand a current program that provides one-on-one advising to reduce barriers to career advancement (i.e., the Gate Opener Project that has been funded through private foundations). Finally, the state really does not know how well many institutions of higher learning align their programs with the workforce knowledge and competency framework (Table A-1-11). This makes it difficult to understand and track how well providers are being prepared to work with young children and families, support institutions of higher learning in developing the future workforce, learn how preservice training relates to subsequent training needs once providers begin their careers in the field, track retention rates of providers as it relates to the quality of their training, and a host of other important questions about the early childhood workforce. One other concern about this section is that the

application describes how linkages of workforce data to other existing early learning data systems (also described in section E2) will enhance the use of data (e.g., "This analysis will help the state ensure teacher quality and improved child outcomes for high needs populations and guide PD planning and continuous program improvement at individual, program, regional and state levels.") This statement shows good intentions, but is quite vague and a few examples to show specifically how data would lead to improvements would have been helpful to evaluate what such an analysis might yield that will help the state in its workforce planning efforts.

### E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (E)(1)
<p>Currently, Pennsylvania does not have a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment, but local districts conduct screenings of children in kindergarten. This is a major gap in the state's early learning system because the state cannot really know (1) how well high needs children are doing at kindergarten entry and (2) how well early learning programs are helping to better prepare them for success in school. The application describes the state's initial steps and a strategic plan that is ambitious. However, the plan may not be totally achievable for reaching the goal of having a common statewide child assessment by 2014. Among the initial steps, the state has a child outcomes framework and promotes authentic assessment, an excellent first step for moving towards a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment. The state currently is piloting an authentic observation tool this school year, the Keystone Kindergarten Inventory, but this pilot is really a very minimal degree of current implementation e.g., small in scope, sample not representative across the state). On a positive note, the state has engaged stakeholders (e.g., families, teachers, school administrators) to learn their perspectives on a kindergarten entry assessment. But no information about what was found is included in the application. The tool being piloted includes all essential domains of school readiness except for physical well-being and motor development (which is being added to the tool in spring 2012). But the tool was not included in the application for review so it is hard to know how appropriate it is for this purpose. Because the state is in the pilot phase, currently there are no reliability and validity data available, and of course, no resulting data are included in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (Table A-1-12). In the pilot, surveys and focus groups are being done with kindergarten teachers, which is a smart and effective activity to understand the strengths and weakness of the tool and its use. This shows that the state has minimally implemented a kindergarten entry assessment. The state also will be using external evaluators to analyze the pilot data to determine the psychometric properties of the tool, another excellent and necessary activity to provide preliminary information on the reliability of the tool. Missing from the plan is any mention of longer term validation by examining the how well the results from the tool predict later school outcomes (e.g., grade retention and school achievement scores in the early elementary grades; school adjustment or behavioral difficulties, etc.). The state also has a step-by-step timeline for 2012, 2013, and 2014, with specific steps and activities. The state is proposing to reach the goal of full statewide implementation by September 2014. However, some of the steps are not described with enough clarity to understand what is being proposed, some steps seem to require more time than proposed, and the budget for the entire set of activities seems to be inadequate (or at the very least, is not described clearly enough to know if the work can be done within the proposed budget). That is, for example, The Budget Table I-3 shows about \$1.9 million for all 4 years</p>

for the Keystones Framework project (which included the kindergarten entry assessment - with the budget narrative showing \$100,000, \$180,000, \$325,000, and \$225,000, in Years 1 to 4, respectively), which is clearly not enough funding to do all the development work, piloting, training and full implementation work statewide by the 2014 school year. The application also describes that use of \$3.8 million for the State Longitudinal Data System grant in Fiscal year 2013, but is it not clear what these funds will be used for, and 2013 is too early in the timeline for full statewide implementation. As another example, exactly what the common statewide assessment will actually consist of is unclear. That is, the application states that the state will "develop and implement a new suite of child outcome reporting tools organized through a single framework that measures child development and progress from birth to age eight, covers a broad range of outcome domains, and is anchored at children's transition to Kindergarten". In another section, it is stated that this will all be completed in spring 20-12, hardly achievable in such a short period of time (i.e. section C2 describes development of the Keystone Child Outcomes Framework kindergarten assessment by spring 2012 with an unrealistic set of steps needed to get this done). In sum, then, the plans and the budget for the activities in this section are confusing, and seem to be not well matched and unrealistic to achieve. One critical feature of the plan that is commendable is the development of a convenient online data system that teachers will use to enter their data and web-based modules for training of teachers. The application contains no descriptions of the plans for development of reports or other tools that will teachers to use their data, either in the aggregate for the entire class of children or for individual children. It is implied that teachers will be able to use the child data for instructional planning, but the narrative is too vague to know how well this feature will be implemented.

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	17

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system—

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;

(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;

(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;

(d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and

(e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (E)(2)

Pennsylvania has a long history of developing an early childhood data system, known as PELICAN (Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks). The state ranks as outstanding for having a data system that is the only one in the nation that has all 10 of the essential elements that the Early Childhood Data Collaborative has identified as needed to have an effective and useful data system about early childhood. This means that the PELICAN system has uniquely identified child-level data that can be linked to program quality data, to early childhood workforce data, and to the K12 school data system, there is a state governance body to manage data collection and use, and excellent privacy protection and security policies are in place. In the application, the state describes a number of new current activities that are great next steps needed to make the existing data more complete, accurate and useful. For example, the state would like to capture more of the child outcomes (assessment data, services provided to children in Head Start programs, and aggregate reports for early learning programs about the 3rd grade outcomes for children they served), all features that are not yet available. Additionally, the state also does not have data about all early childhood educators and program directors in the state in the data system (i.e., who has a credential). It is not clear from the application how all the different components of the PELICAN data system are coordinated or fully integrated with each other (so that clear and unduplicated data can be obtained from the data system), but all the essential elements laid out in Table A-1-13 are in one or more of the system's components. In the application, the state rightly identified certain gaps that they would like to work on in the coming years. As mentioned earlier, there are only a limited set of static reports that users can generate, and they do not give users the kinds of information they need (e.g., data that teachers can use for improving instruction, program can use to improve quality, and policymakers can use to advocate for early learning, think about resource distribution, and/or report out to other stakeholders (e.g., legislators, general public, families). With these gaps in mind, the state has articulated a clear high-quality plan that will expand the tools available for early learning providers so they can really see and use their own data for program improvement activities. It is clear from the application that the state has invested time and money in data system development, and has begun work on data use, at least at the state level for program planning and improvement purposes, but it is less clear how local programs, districts or communities have used any data from the system to date. It is puzzling that the state has not invested resources and efforts on facilitating use of data given the state's strong commitment to collecting data (i.e., showing all the many ways that data are actually being used currently, especially at local program levels to improve programs, instruction, and ultimately child outcomes). The plan has many innovative features that take advantage of 21st century technology, and will allow users to link data that currently are not linked. The application refers to this vision as "a new phase of systemic

data-driven quality improvement" (page 247). The application describes a provider dashboard and management tool that would be useful for providers in their daily work, and could also be used by administrators and other stakeholders to generate information to address many questions. That is, with some of the aggregate reports being proposed that are described in the application (for which data from multiple systems would be linked), users at the school, or district, or state level should have powerful and compelling data for decision making. The state has thought through the kinds of important questions that it would like to address with a more powerful data system and linkage architecture that have as a goal improving child outcomes and program quality. Some of the kinds of questions that could be addressed include, for instance: how do program quality factors of provider/early educator qualifications or training relate to child outcomes?; what kinds of provider supports and incentives keep highly qualified early educators in the workforce?; do more high needs children access top-tier programs over time? The plan proposes that the dashboard and a variety of tools for multiple types of users (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators) would be fully implemented by the end of the grant. The application also makes a good case for how having high-quality data should serve to promote sustainability of high-quality programming via well informed parents, providers, and others who will demand high-quality early learning programs once they can see the data that shows how they lead to positive child outcomes.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>234</b>

### Priorities

#### Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

#### Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

Comments on (P)(2)
<p>Pennsylvania began its Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS), known as the Keystone Stars program in 2002, well ahead of most other states, and it is a well designed system. The state has invested much effort to examine the validity of the system. For instance, the state has already conducted (or commissioned) multiple evaluations and studies of the Keystone Stars program, including participation in 2 national studies of TQRISs funded by the federal Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation of the Administration for Children and Families (OPRE-ACF). Independent evaluations of the Keystone Stars program have been conducted by national known, well respected early childhood researchers at the University of Pittsburgh in 2003, 2004, and 2006. These studies have shown positive results about program quality and child outcomes related to program quality, how well the system works, including that the training and professional development (PD) supports do predict quality, and what kinds of improvements should be made to the Keystone Stars program. Licensing is required to be in the system (see B1). Stars are suspended until the program is back in compliance with licensing standards, but the application did not state what happens to programs when they fall out of compliance (e.g., what help do they get to help them get their license reinstated?). Additionally, the state is continuously looking for ways to improve the system. For instance, the state is just beginning to look at whether or not to begin widespread use of the CLASS measure (an observational program quality measure about the quality of teacher-child interactions), beginning in 2010 with a statewide pilot study of the CLASS to study its use as another tool to promote program quality. The data presented in section B2 (Table B-2-3) show that current participation in the Keystone Stars program is somewhat low and varies by type of program. For example, programs receiving CCDF funds have 50% participation, Head Start programs have 11.7%, and state preK programs have 47.2% participation rates. The goal to increase participation to 56% by 2016 for programs receiving CCDF funds (serving a huge proportion of high needs children) seems minimally ambitious, and does not meet the required goal of 100% participation. Why this is the goal for this type of program is not explained in the application, but it suggests that the incentives for participation are not adequate or valued by programs. Likewise, none of the IDEA preschool programs are currently in the rating system, but the application proposes to have all of them (34) participating by 2016 and give no specific details about how this will be accomplished. As an example of future plans, Pennsylvania's application describes a high-quality plan for continuing and expanding access to high-quality programs for high needs children which acknowledges that many of the programs used by these children need more intensive supports to move up in the number of stars they have (e.g., family child care providers; subsidized child care centers). The</p>

application describes two projects to meet this goal, a coaching project for center-based programs and a mentoring program for family child care providers, and sets out numbers and percentages of different program types that will have the high start ratings (3 and 4) by the end of the grant in 2016. The numbers are reasonable and achievable based on the state's earlier data showing an annual 2.5% to 3% in the number of programs at the 3 and 4 star levels. An appendix (B-4-5) does a nice job of laying out the preliminary plan for these two new projects.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	<b>0 or 10</b>	<b>No</b>

To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--

(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or

(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.

**Comments on (P)(3)**

The state has selected E1 to meet this priority. In that section of the application, the state described that there is no common statewide kindergarten entry assessment in place currently. The application describes the state's initial steps and proposed plan that is ambitious and likely not achievable for reaching the goal of having a common statewide child assessment by 2014 for all state-funded early learning teachers and kindergarten teachers, making it a minimal implementation and receiving less than 70% the points. Among the initial steps, the state has a child outcomes framework and promotes authentic assessment, which is an excellent first step for moving towards a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment. The state currently is piloting an authentic observation tool this school year, the Keystone Kindergarten Inventory, but this is a very minimal implementation. The state has engaged stakeholders (e.g., families, teachers, school administrators) to learn their perspectives on a kindergarten entry assessment, but no information about what was found is contained in the application. The tool being piloted was not included in the application for review so it is hard to know how adequate it may be. Data analytic plans were described and they were appropriate to learn about the psychometric properties of the tool, a necessary step to know if the tool will yield valid and reliable data. The discussion of the budget for this component of the application is confusing and difficult to follow. As described in section E1, The state is proposing to reach the goal of full statewide implementation by September 2014. However, some of the steps are not described with enough clarity to understand what is being proposed, some steps seem to require more time than proposed, and the budget for the entire set of activities seems to be inadequate (or at the very least, is not described clearly enough to know if the work can be done within the proposed budget). That is, for example, The Budget Table I-3 shows about \$1.9 million for all 4 years for the Keystones Framework project (which included the kindergarten entry assessment - with the budget narrative showing \$100,000, \$180,000, \$325,000, and \$225,000, in Years 1 to 4, respectively), which is clearly not enough funding to do all the development work, piloting, training and full implementation work statewide by the 2014 school year. The application also describes that use of \$3.8 million for the State Longitudinal Data System grant in Fiscal year 2013; but is it not clear what these funds will be used for, and 2013 is too early in the timeline for full statewide implementation. Also what the common statewide assessment will actually consist of is unclear. That is, the application states that the state will "develop and implement a new suite of child outcome reporting tools organized through a single framework that measures child development and progress from birth to age eight, covers a broad range of outcome domains, and is anchored at children's transition to Kindergarten". But the application also stated that this will all be completed in spring 20-12, hardly achievable in such a short period of time (i.e. section C2 describes development of the Keystone Child Outcomes Framework kindergarten assessment by spring 2012 with an unrealistic set of steps needed to get this done). In sum, then, the plans and the budget for the activities in this section are confusing, and seem to be not well matched and unrealistic to achieve. The selection criteria for E1 did not reach 70%.

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
<b>Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.</b>	<b>Yes</b>

To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the

State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.

#### Comments on Absolute Priority

Pennsylvania's application clearly meets this absolute priority. As described above for sections B, C, D, and E, the planned activities should result in more high needs children being served in high-quality early learning programs, more providers receiving appropriate training, more programs being rated and being of high-quality using the state's TQRIS, and expanded use of data for program planning and improvement activities, both statewide and locally. Pennsylvania has been thinking about and working on building a statewide integrated and high-quality early learning system for over a decade, investing time and money into all features of a high-quality early learning system. For instance: By 2007, Pennsylvania had established the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) which spans the Departments of Education and Public Welfare to administer all of the state-funded and state-administered early learning and development programs. This kind of state level structure provides an integrated administrative unit that can facilitate better communication, use of funds and resources, and development of unified and coordinated program standards, training and technical assistance, and data systems than is more common in states without such an integrated state agency. In the appendices, the application contains clearly articulated high-quality logic models for each core area and focused investment area that can serve as blueprints for the state's planned activities and progress made throughout the implementation of the grant. These logic models are impressive in their scope, they show a great deal of careful thought about how different activities will lead to specific tangible and important improvements, and they show both short-term and long-term benchmarks to give the state a handle on how well they are moving in the right direction. As described in some sections above, some of the plans may be more ambitious than can be achieved in 4 years (e.g., see section E1). Pennsylvania began its Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS), known as the Keystone Stars program in 2002, well ahead of most other states, showing a strong commitment to supporting quality in its early learning programs. Pennsylvania has a very well functioning system in place to rate and monitor early learning programs, based on over 10 years of experience implementing their Keystone Stars program. The application shows how the state will expand this program across the state. Pennsylvania has a strong commitment to evaluating all aspects of its early learning system and using the resulting data to inform policy development and practices, make changes as needed, allocate resources, all in the service of promoting high-quality programming and increasing access for high needs children. For instance, the state has already conducted (or commissioned) multiple evaluations and studies of the Keystone Stars program, including participation in 2 national studies of TQRISs funded by the federal Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation of the Administration for Children and Families (OPRE-ACF). Likewise, evaluation studies have been conducted to see if the technical assistance provided to early learning programs to improve their quality ratings is making a difference. Pennsylvania has developed a set of early learning standards for both infants/toddlers and for preschoolers, but also sets for kindergarteners, and for 1st and 2nd graders (shown in appendices). And the state has been advocating for the use of authentic child assessments by early learning programs, and has just begun to develop a kindergarten entry assessment to implement statewide. Pennsylvania currently has a comprehensive career development system, with a workforce knowledge and competency framework that is called the Core Body of Knowledge or CBK that provide detail about what educators need to know and do to promote children's learning and improve child outcomes (also with input from higher education representatives). In the application, the narrative lays out specific plans for expanding access and quality across all aspects of the early learning system that are ambitious, mainly achievable, and that build on the solid foundation that Pennsylvania already has in place.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # PA-5031

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/15/2011 - 10:56 AM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 16. Includes detailed text description of the core area and its sub-points (a-d).

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

Overall, the state's history of increasing systems to recognize and promote quality early learning programs (evidenced by the Keystone STARS program), and integrated approach to early learning systems (evidenced by the establishment of the collaborative Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)) demonstrate a strong commitment to prioritizing early childhood and meeting the needs of high-needs children across the state. However, because financial investments in key areas have declined over the past five years, it is less clear that the necessary funding would be accessible to supplement and sustain this work. For these reasons, the section was scored in the medium-high category.\*\*\* (a) Financial investment: According to Table (A)(1)-4, a decline in funding was noted across several categories, and overall levels of state funding are currently below the 2007 figures.\*\*\* (b) Increasing participation for high-needs children: According to table (A)(1)-5, numbers of high-needs children served has stayed roughly the same or declined in the past 5 years.\*\*\* (c) Existing legislation/policies/practices: The establishment of a jointly funded OCDEL is a strength because this coordinated office bridges two departments whose policies affect children and coordinates services for enhanced efficiency.\*\*\* (d) Current status in key areas: Common early learning standards utilized by all programs within OCDEL are a strength. Additional support by integrating standards into online resource systems for use by providers, parent-friendly materials, and integration within the TORIS system demonstrate achievement in this key area. In the area of Comprehensive Assessment Systems, Table (A)(1)-7 demonstrates an appropriate assessment framework for some programs. In other programs, only developmental screenings and formative assessments are implemented, and measures of environmental quality and adult-child interactions are not used. However, statewide data collection and the establishment of a 2007 common set of assessments lends strength to the state's capacity for analysis and monitoring. Current required health promotion practices appear appropriate. Current family engagement strategies are comprehensive, particularly within the Keystone STARS program, which recognizes a tiered approach aimed at increasing quality. The establishment of a Career Lattice and a Workforce Competencies Framework is an important achievement, particularly when aligned with the state's credentialing bodies and the Early Learning Standards framework. The state's plan for a Kindergarten Entry Assessment would address essential domains of readiness, and is in a small 24 school pilot during the current



school year. However, the assessment is not well described, and Table (A)(1)-12 is vague (it is not clear whether the inventory is a newly developed assessment or a battery of assessments). A network of data systems is already in place to track child-level data and program-level data, each with a unique identifier with the capacity to track individuals over time, a clear strength.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</b>	20	12

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;

(b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(2)**

The states reform agenda has some strengths; it is comprehensive (addresses program improvement, improved outcomes for high-needs children, and closing the readiness gap) and clearly builds on established progress to date in reasonable areas (see (c) below). However, a lack of specific goals across the reform agenda in general (and especially in the area of targeting children with high needs) is a weakness and it is unclear whether goals are ambitious or achievable due to a lack of detailed information about how many programs, families and children the state hopes to impact through their reform agenda or how much improvement the state hopes to make in terms of achieving increased school readiness. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range.\*\*\* (a) Overall, section (A)(2) lacks information about measurable goals, except with regard to the Keystone STARS program. Measureable goals are established for increasing program participation in the STARS Program (25% increase in participation), and for increasing program quality within participating STARS centers (305 centers and 252 family childcare homes will move up one star). Given that the state's plan for increasing participation in STARS consists of incorporating existing state-funded programs into the initiative (such as Head Start and public prekindergarten), this plan seems achievable, but not ambitious. The state did not address increasing participation among programs for which no quality information is known. (Head Start and public prekindergarten programs are already part of the state-funded network in which assessments are monitored and standards are mandated.) The state's plan for raising the star level of 557 programs (305 centers plus 252 family child care homes) reaching 20,000 children is achievable, and the state refers to increasing technical assistance for programs serving high-needs children in order to reach this goal. Given that only 15% of Keystone STARS programs are in the top tiers of quality (3- or 4 STAR designations), this goal is ambitious as well; however, it is not clear whether programs serving children with high needs would be targeted. The majority of goals outlined by the state lack specificity and are generic-- for example, "creating the Early Learning GPS", or "providing children with books and activities to promote parent engagement". Information is not provided regarding how many programs or parents these initiatives will reach, or how many children and families will be impacted by expansions of existing programs or the creation of new ones. Goals in this section are not well-developed; for example, the proposal identifies the enhancement of technological systems to better monitor expulsions and suspensions, but it is not clear how this will translate into improved program quality or outcomes for children because of a lack of specific goal setting (i.e. setting a target for a reduction in the number of expulsions). \*\*\* (b) It is clear that the proposed reform agenda builds on the progress Pennsylvania has made thus far, and identifies clear areas for targeted improvement, which are aligned with the state's chosen focus investment areas (Summary Chart of PA's Early Learning and Development Reform Agenda). However, a lack of articulated goals within each of the reform areas (excepting program quality improvement) weakens the clear and credible path toward achieving those goals. \*\*\* (c) The state's rationale for selected focus investment areas is well-developed and strategic, building on progress in the state to date for continued improvement. Within FIA C, the state builds on established common early learning standards to enhance the use of the standards through alignment of curriculum and professional development, enhancing the transition between B-K systems and K-3 systems and establishing common expectations for educators. Within FIA D, the state builds on the existing workforce resources (career lattice and competencies) to create a centralized data system to monitor individual professional development needs. Extending the workforce resources to the infant/toddler level and focusing on professional knowledge and competencies for these educators is a clear strength because infant/toddler knowledge has declined among professionals in recent years, and reaching children at this early age is critical. Within FIA E, the state has opted to address both criteria to follow through on the existing pilot of the Kindergarten entry assessment and tie this information into existing data systems, while streamlining those data systems to provide actionable information to a variety of stakeholders; for example, parents, programs, administrators, and policy makers. Pennsylvania's rationale for selection of FIAs is a strength because of the purposeful method of linking prior progress with opportunities to build and improve in the above stated areas.

	Available	Score
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The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (A)(3)**

Well-established governance and communication structures and broad-based support from a variety of stakeholders lend strength to the state's proposal. A lack of specific information regarding participating state agencies' intent to align and leverage existing funding and only minimal reference to maximizing numbers of participating programs are weaknesses. For these reasons, the section was scored in the high end of the medium range. \*\*\* (a) Section (A)(3) outlines the state's existing governance structure and communication/decision making procedures which will be utilized if a grant is awarded. These structures and procedures are well-organized and already in place between the designated lead agency (Office of Child Development and Early Learning) and other participating agencies (Department of Education, Department of Public Welfare, and Department of Health). Further, the state outlines the existing structure for incorporating feedback from a variety of stakeholders: for example, parents, providers, business community. 1. Organizational structure is a strength because it is already established and outlines regular communication and decision-making procedures. 2. Established roles and responsibilities are strongly outlined, including a detailed description of supporting councils (Early Learning Council, State Interagency Coordinating Council, and Early Learning Investment Council) and their membership and roles. 3. Decision making procedures are strong because they are already established and tiered with respect to the nature of the decision to be made, to provide for an appropriate level of involvement from stakeholders and participating agencies. 4. Reporting and input procedures are already established (a strength) through the Councils listed above, and regularly scheduled sessions will continue through the course of the grant period. \*\*\* (b) MOU's indicate strong commitment and outline scopes of work that are appropriate and aligned

with the nature of the proposed projects. 1. Terms and conditions indicate strong commitment, but do not explicitly address plans to align and leverage existing state funding to support the state plan. 2. "Scope of work" descriptions are strong and complete, addressing appropriate areas of the state's plan. Some mention of increasing efforts to maximize the number of Participating Programs is noted (in the expansion of the Keystone STARS Program within the Department of Education's Scope of Work).\*\*\* (c) Letters of support represent a strong and comprehensive variety of individual stakeholders from multiple arenas (for example: legislators, early childhood organizations, providers, business leaders). Letters are detailed and persuasive (a strength).

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.</b>	15	9

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

- (1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;
- (2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and
- (3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (A)(4)

The state has developed a clear plan to use existing funding in conjunction with grant funding to expand and establish programming in PA. Allocation of existing funds is well-aligned with the grant's purpose, although funding amounts for specific projects appear inappropriate or disproportionate at times (see (b) below). The plan for sustaining programming following the grant period is conceptually reasonable, but lacks specificity in terms of numbers/percentages of children who will continue to be served after grant funding ceases. For these reasons, this section was scored in the medium range.\*\*\* (a) The state proposes to supplement grant funds with significant existing funds across multiple programs (per Table (A)(4)(a)) to expand and establish programs and capacity that can be supported through existing funds at the conclusion of the grant period. Through the Department of Education, existing funding will be contributed to the project primarily in the area of data systems development, which is appropriate given the state's focus on maximizing data use for workforce development, program improvement, and child outcome tracking. Within the Department of Public Welfare, funding from quality set-asides will be designated to expansion of Keystone STARS and the Workforce Effectiveness programs, which is appropriate given the potential for these programs to impact children's school readiness.\*\*\* (b) Budget tables and narratives clearly describe funding dedicated to the projects within this proposal. In some cases, funding allocation appears to be well-suited to the goals of the project and the likelihood of impacting children's school readiness (for example, a large portion of funding is dedicated to the expansion and validation of the Keystone STARS program, as well as efforts to improve technical assistance and coaching for greater improvements in programs serving high-needs children). However, the yearly allocations for programs less directly tied to child outcomes, while important, seem disproportionate to the overarching goals of the state's plan and desire to impact outcomes for high-needs children (specifically, yearly funding for the Reach Out and Read program and recurring training for pediatricians in the area of identifying developmental delays). Although parent engagement around book reading and early identification of delays are both important, these programs are not targeted expenditures for high-needs children (or the targeted nature is not specified), and represent significant yearly costs. In building the rationale for the state's need, neither parental book reading nor early identification were cited as specific areas of concern for the state (by comparison, the inclusion of infant-toddler content in higher education programs and credentialing was specifically noted as an area of concern). Further, some plans for expenditure seem inappropriate or unlikely to lead to success, particularly the low proportion (3% of total request) of funding allocated for development of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment and the state's plan to transfer costs for "authentic assessments" to the providers themselves over time.\*\*\* (c) Significant funding has already been allocated in PA in the areas of TQRIS (\$33.8m) and data management (\$26m) in particular, which lends credibility to the claim that these programs would be maintained after the grant concludes. However, the proposal does not give specific numbers or percentages in terms of how capacity will be maintained in the programs following the grant period.

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;
- (5) Health promotion practices; and
- (6) Effective data practices;

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(1)**

The state has a well-established, common, state-wide TQRIS: Keystone STARS. As detailed below, the program is substantially implemented, and addresses nearly every area of quality required in this section. However, the TQRIS can only sometimes differentiate quality meaningfully because the rigorous measurements that allow for this differentiation are only required in the top-tiers of the TQRIS. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range. \*\*\* (a) Keystone STARS meets the definition of "Comprehensive" because only screening practices are required below STAR level 3. Only in the top tiers are assessment practices required to be "comprehensive" according to the federal definition (inclusion of screening and formative assessment, and measurement of environmental and interaction quality). 3. Early Childhood Educator requirements throughout the Keystone STAR levels demonstrate increasing stringency and a commitment to rigorous expectations for staff to hold degrees specific to early childhood education. For example, 2 STAR centers are required to have 50% of lead teachers with Associates degrees; 3 STAR centers are required to have 100% of directors and lead teachers with Associates degrees; and 4 STAR centers are required to have 100% of directors and 50% of lead teachers with Bachelor's degrees. 4. Family engagement strategies are well-represented by the TQRIS requirements, each tier building upon the prior tier and including a variety of requirements for increasing efforts by programs to promote family involvement, such as two-way communication, regular conferences, transition activities, provision of information and resources. Requirements and frameworks for family engagement as measured by the TQRIS are comprehensive and strong. 5. Health promotion practices are embedded within the TQRIS through its foundation of licensing standards, a strength. Beginning at the 2 STAR level, programs are required to implement developmental screenings and develop plans to strengthen health and safety practices by addressing issues discovered during safety reviews of the program and reviews of documentation of illness and injury reports. 6. Keystone STARS includes effective data practices by reporting findings through the COMPASS website and making information and assistance available to parents through the child care referral network. Further, programs achieving a 3- or 4-STAR level designation are required to report on child outcome and progress data, which can be used for goal-setting at the state level and targeting of resources to programs in need. However, these strengths apply only to center-based programs and reporting is not conducted in the same manner for family child care and other types of care. However, it is part of the state's plan to expand reporting to include such settings.\*\*\* (b) Standards and tiers are clearly differentiated and reflect high standards, particularly in the area of staff qualifications (noted above) and family engagement (noted above). In the area of Environmental Quality, the standards do not reflect the highest expectations. For example, independent assessment using the ERS tools is only required for programs seeking a 3- or 4- STAR designation. Further, programs can achieve a 3 STAR, or "top tier", designations with less than a 5 overall score on the ERS tools (3 STAR: 4.25; a score of 5 is considered to be "good" quality). \*\*\* (c) Keystone STARS relies on the state licensing system as its foundation, a clear strength because of the inclusion of these health and safety requirements, demonstration of alignment with other monitoring systems, and elimination of duplicate requirements or assessments. Another demonstration of alignment is the state's policy of revoking or suspending a STAR designation should a program be out of compliance with state licensing requirements. Policies such as this one maintain the integrity of the program by

confirming that quality designations represents a programs achievement to go above and beyond the requirements in the state.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	15	8

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(2)**

Due to a mix of ambitious and non-ambitious goals for maximizing TQRIS participation in state-funded preschool and a lack of information related to recruitment and enrollment targeted to new high-needs areas and populations, this section was scored in the middle range. The state has made great strides already to substantially implement the TQRIS statewide; however, the plan lacks specificity of intent to continue to maximize participation. \*\*\* (a) According to Table (B)(2)(3), the state does not aim to have all publicly funded programs participating in Keystone STARS by the end of the grant funding period. There are two categories of program (state-funded preschool and programs funded by IDEA, Part C) where the state establishes a strong goal to include nearly all programs in the TQRIS (95% and 100% respectively). However, the majority of programs have lower goals for inclusion in the TQRIS (notably Head Start and CCDF funded preschools) and this represents a weakness within this section. Further, the state claims that participation levels in the Keystone STARS program have stabilized due to its age, indicating that there is minimal expectation for increases in participation overall. The plan makes reference to increased efforts to recruit and enroll in high needs areas, but this claim is not backed up by information about what strategies would be used, what areas would be targeted, or any goals for recruitment numbers among these populations. Additionally, although this claim is made in the narrative, it does not appear in the state's chart reflecting the plan for maximizing participation in the TQRIS. The state does describe efforts to enroll programs which are already part of the state's network with regard to data collection and monitoring (such as state-funded preschool programs and state-supplemented Head Start programs). Although these programs are attended by high-needs children (each has an income requirement for enrollment), they are already part of the state's monitoring, reporting, and assessment systems, so it is not clear how inclusion in the TQRIS will differentially impact the children served by these programs. The state does detail some guidelines for inclusion of new groups of programs (licensed nursery schools, programs funded by IDEA Part B, programs funded under Title I), but the numbers for target enrollment within these categories are very low. \*\*\* (b) The state does not outline strategies to make high quality programs more accessible to high-needs children, except to state that if more state-funded and Head Start programs are included in Keystone STARS, then there will be more access to high quality programs for high needs children (because the programs themselves accept only children who are designated as high-needs). The state does describe one incentive available to Early Learning Programs to include children eligible for Early Intervention services. However, the state does not detail what the incentive entails, nor claim that programs must be of a certain level of quality in order to be eligible to receive it. \*\*\* (c) Performance measures presented in Table (B)(2)(3) outline some goals that are ambitious (95% participation from state-funded preschools in TQRIS; 100% participation from programs funded by IDEA Part B in TQRIS) and others which are not ambitious (only 45% of Head Start and Early Head Start programs, only 15% of programs funded under Title I). Given the scope and infrastructure of this well-established and well-staffed program, these goals seem achievable, but are not always ambitious.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	15	11

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

This well-developed TORIS system has an established, well-implemented procedure for both rating and monitoring quality of early learning programs. Because the system is already substantially in place and has some elements of reliable and valid rating and monitoring practices (see (a) below) and very strong implementation of mechanisms to provide information to parents, this section was rated in the high end of the middle range. \*\*\* (a) STAR Designations are compiled through three modes of information gathering. First, documentation is submitted. However, it is not clear whether there are quality control checks (such as random spot checking for accuracy) in place to ensure the reliability of this information. Second, trained monitors, STAR Specialists, are assigned to conduct interviews and observe programs. The data collection for STAR Specialists was not described in terms of reliability or validity. Procedures for inter-rater reliability for STAR Specialists were described (during the pilot of this reliability project) as occurring once every 15 visits. The state's plan indicates that regular reliability visits still take place, but it is not clear whether these visits are taking place with the same regularity as they were during the pilot phase. Third, 3rd party ERS (a reliable and valid tool for measuring environmental quality in child care) assessors are contracted for assessment of programs seeking a 3 or 4 STAR designation. These evaluators have regular (the plan does not specify degree of regularity) reliability checks and achieved a high level (93%) during a recent year. \*\*\* (b) Information regarding STAR Designations as well as licensing information (as well as a host of other parent-friendly information and assistance) are available primarily through two methods: the COMPASS website and the child care referral phone lines. These methods meet the criteria of publicly available and easy-to-understand formats, in addition to providing additional support necessary to help parents use the information to make child care selections, a clear strength. The fact that family child care STAR designations are not available on the COMPASS website is a weakness, but this is addressed in the state's plan moving forward.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	20	13

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

The state's established framework of support and incentives is strong, and plans for increasing the impact of technical assistance hold promise. The state makes information about choosing quality child care easily accessible to parents— another strength because this increases accessibility (although it is not clear how this will impact affordability for children with high needs). A lack of ambitious, achievable goals designed to meaningful increase access to high quality care for children who do not currently access high quality care weakens this section. For these reasons, this section was scored in the medium range. \*\*\* (a) The state's fully implemented procedures for providing support and incentives to participant programs is a strength because the established methods both recognize achievement and promote continuous quality improvement at every level of the TQRIS

continuum. A series of training supports exist to help newly enrolled programs learn about both the TQRIS system overall and the primary assessment tool utilized by Keystone STARS (the ERS tools). Procedures are in place to help programs through the process of developing a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan, along with technical assistance from a consultant, and access to grant funds to implement this plan. This system provides programs the structure and support (financial and training/consultation) needed to achieve higher levels of quality, and the state's history of quality improvement supports its effectiveness. Merit and educational achievement awards are available to acknowledge growth, promote educational advancement, and encourage staff retention, both key to building quality settings for young children. Further, financial supports such as scholarships and reimbursements are accessible to staff to continue advancing through the state's career lattice. Information in the appendices regarding the state's investment in grants, awards, and supports for educational advancement demonstrate commitment to improved quality in participating centers. To recognize the costs associated with increasing quality, the state has developed and implemented a subsidy add-on system to support and facilitate programs' abilities to offer increased quality to children with high-needs. The state offers additional incentives to programs enrolling children with high needs, but sets a low threshold for meeting this qualification (5% enrollment of children receiving subsidy payments).\*\*\* (b) The dual systems of the COMPASS website and the toll-free child care referral line provide parents with the support and information needed to make decisions about child care settings. Further, the child care referral resource provides education to families about the Keystone STARS program so that families have a better understanding of the importance of choosing quality. Information about hours of operation, licensing records, and additional child support services are available through these family support resources. This sub-criteria is strong.\*\*\* (c) Goals set for moving more programs to the top tiers of TQRIS and enrolling more children into top-tier programs were less strong: 1. The state set a goal to move 305 centers and 252 family child care homes up one STAR level, but this goal did not specify that they would move into the top-tier of the TQRIS. Goals in specific areas appear ambitious (93% of state funded preschool and 45% of Head Start children will be in the top tier); however, given that these programs are already well supported and well monitored, it is likely that upon entry to the TQRIS, these programs will already demonstrate high (top tier) quality. This may increase the number of programs in the top tiers, but it may not represent meaningful change/increases in quality for high-needs children, who were already receiving these services prior to their site's enrollment in TQRIS. However, the state's Center-based STARS Coaching Project (designed to reduce caseloads specifically for centers serving high-needs children) is a strategic decision designed to explicitly give programs in high-needs areas the more intensive support necessary to make meaningful increases in quality that can result in positive impacts for children. Similarly, the Family Child Care Home Mentoring Project (rooted in a pilot project from one area of the state) has the potential to impact a large population of high-needs children, as many high-needs families rely on this type of child care. Although these two projects have a great deal of potential to positively impact high-needs children, the description of these strategies was not linked to the projections for increases in the number of top-tier programs as per Table (B)(4)(c)(1). The figures in this table appear achievable, but represent similar basic proportions of STAR 1, STAR 2, and STAR 3/4 programs. This is less ambitious because it does not indicate that a higher proportion of children will be in higher quality care. 2. One method proposed by the state to increase the number of high needs children being served by TQRIS programs is the support and promotion of inclusion-based practices in typical early childhood programs. The state demonstrates a commitment to increased inclusion practices by providing increasing numbers of early interventions in the inclusive preschool setting, a clear strength given that these programs have expanded their capacity to serve this high-needs population. However, it seems that the state's primary strategy to boost enrollment in 3 or 4 STAR programs is to enroll state-funded and Head Start programs, who are already operating with high levels of supports and monitoring. Methods to promote access to children who are not currently receiving high quality care are not well developed.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

- (a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and
- (b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (B)(5)**

Pennsylvania's plan for validating the tiers of Keystone STARS and examining a link with child outcomes is strong because of a history of evaluation efforts, a high current level of participating centers, and a data system infrastructure to support a project of this scope. The state's plan to secure national experts and coordinate efforts with other states' work in this area strengthens the plan further, and for these reasons, this section is scored in the high range. \*\*\* (a) The state's plan to validate the Keystone STARS program will build on prior evaluation efforts. STAR levels have already been shown to associate with ERS scores, and the state's plan for validation involves associating STAR levels with a tool outside the Keystone Program Standards-- the CLASS instrument, a reliable, valid tool to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions. Pilot work with the CLASS instrument has indicated its ability to detect quality differentiations between levels of quality in Pennsylvania early childhood settings, so the selection of this design is reasonable and strong. The state's plan to examine quality in ALL STAR levels (not only levels 3 and 4) is a strength compared to previous evaluation efforts in the state. \*\*\* (b) Pennsylvania's

well-established TORIS is uniquely situated to approach the work of linking program quality (as measured by TQRISs) with outcomes for children. Program level change does not link immediately to reflections of child-outcomes, so the fact that the program is established and consistently administered makes this type of work feasible. Pennsylvania's comprehensive data systems (and the plans within this proposal to further coordinate it) will enable to state to track children longitudinally through third grade, something that would not otherwise be possible. The state's plan to link child outcomes (including school readiness) with levels of program quality AND changes in program quality, as well as the state's capacity for this level of work makes this sub-criterion strong.

**Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application—

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C);
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E).

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that—

- (a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;
- (c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and
- (d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(1)**

The state has already developed and substantially implemented high quality early learning and development standards. These standards are distributed and materials are available widely, with their use being required for state-funded preschool and state supplemented Head Start, as well as increasing levels of incorporation in higher tiers of the Keystone STARS program. For these reasons, this section is scored in the high range. \*\*\* (a) Developed in collaboration with multiple departments, representatives, and researchers, the state's early learning standards are outlined for the required age groups (infants, toddlers, preschoolers) as well as kindergarten, first and second grades. Cultural, developmental, and linguistic appropriateness are addressed in the guidelines for each age group (outlined in the Appendices), and all materials are available in both English and Spanish versions. The standards cover the essential domains of school readiness defined by this application (language/literacy, mathematics/science, approaches toward learning, physical well-being/motor development, and social/emotional development). In addition, the state standards also address creative thinking/expression, social studies, science, and partnerships for learning. Both in age groups and domains addressed, the state's early learning standards exceed the requirements of this application.\*\*\* (b) An expert review and report demonstrated that the early learning standards were well aligned with the state's K-3 standards. Further, companion documents to the early learning standards have outlined a continuum of learning from infancy through kindergarten, linking the two systems. Other associated documents that have been shown to align well with the early learning standards are the Kindergarten learning standards and the Common Core Standards for Kindergarten. \*\*\* (c) The state's early learning standards are used by state-funded preschool programs and state-supplemented Head Start programs and curricula used in these settings must align to the standards. They are incorporated differentially in the Program Standards for the state's TQRIS through increasingly stringent requirements for alignment and incorporation into instruction in programs with STAR designations. Alignment with assessments offered by



publishing companies is reported, but the extent to which these assessments are used in the state is not clear (the assessment framework is in pilot). Professional development activities center around the learning standards, and quality assurance practices (such as a registry of approved trainers) are in place to ensure integrity and consistency of information surrounding the use of the standards. \*\*\* (d) Approved trainers provide professional development activities supporting the use of the early learning standards, but the extent to which these trainings are offered to programs is not clear. Multiple companion documents and electronic tools such as the SAS portal (containing information on standards, assessments, curriculum, instruction, resources, and interventions) exist to promote effective use of the early learning standards by providers. Standards incorporate ideas for instruction in a user-friendly format and are available both electronically and in hard copy (each licensed provider in the state receives a copy). \*\*\*

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.</b>	20	15

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--

- (a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;
- (b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;
- (c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and
- (d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(2)**

The state has partially implemented a comprehensive assessment system, and presents a strong plan for refining and expanding the system in key areas, such as the creation of a coordinated framework and data alignment system. Although the inclusion of a plan to train health care providers on developmental screenings may not be a good fit for this criterion (see (d) below), it does not detract from the state's ability to sufficiently present a strong plan which does meet the requirements of this section. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range. \*\*\* (a) The state's choice of assessment instruments is driven by the OCDEL's identification of the ERS as a mainstay of the quality monitoring process across state-funded preschool programs, state-supplemented Head Start programs, and the Keystone STARS programs. The state is exploring the use of CLASS (another strong measure of classroom quality) to meet the need to measure teacher-child interactions. The CLASS was piloted throughout the state, but it is not clear how widely it was used, or what plans are in place to use it more comprehensively in the future. Child assessment selection is more program driven, but requires developmental screening as a minimum. Observation-based assessment and child outcomes reporting are required for state-funded preschool and state-supplemented Head Start, as well as the top tiers of Keystone STARS. Pennsylvania's common data collection and reporting system is a clear strength because it provides a framework to promote data use to guide instruction and assessment, collect common measures, and monitor progress across the state. \*\*\* (b) The state provides information and guidance to programs on the use of assessments in several ways: guidance documents are available on appropriate selection of child assessment and classroom assessment, and online resources are available through the SAS portal to align assessment with standards and curriculum. Expectations and frameworks are also in place through workforce competencies documents and the content of higher education pre-service curricula. This approach makes a wealth of knowledge available to providers who seek it out, but does not provide a structure to bring the information to providers. \*\*\* (c) Pennsylvania is in a strong position to align data collection and integrate results for the purpose of informing instruction given the progress that has already been made in the state's PELICAN data management system. The state's plan to develop the Keystone Child Outcomes Framework (KCOF) would coordinate this assessment system in a comprehensive way, collecting data from multiple measures from birth to 2nd grade. Using a national model, the KCOF would align multiple authentic assessments across the essential domains of readiness and the early learning standards in the state. Outcomes for programs and outcomes for children are both integrated into this system, and the state's plan to further coordinate the use of this data is appropriate and feasible. Of particular importance is the ability of the KCOF system to gather information and data for children who are served through multiple programs, for the purposes of integrating systems and eliminating duplicate assessment. Because the system shares data between B-K and K-12 systems, it can be used to facilitate transitions between settings for children. \*\*\* (d) The state already utilizes online and face-to-face training to provide approved and regulated professional development to early childhood educators across PA. The network is fully implemented and the state's plan to use this established network to deliver training on assessment administration, alignment, data interpretation is reasonable. The state's plan to deliver developmental screening curricula to health care providers may fall under this sub-criteria, if health care providers are considered under the definition of Early Childhood Educator as defined by this application (not a strong fit as the definition of Early Childhood Educator specifies that the individual works in a Early Learning and Development Program). The state's proposal does not define it as such, however, primary care providers have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the identification of high-needs children early in life, presenting the opportunity to direct the family toward appropriate resources and services. The plan to train health care providers on developmental screenings utilizes a strong model by providing

training in the health care professionals' communities, and the plan is strengthened with the addition of an evaluation component. However, this training may reasonably result in more developmental delays being identified, and the capacity for early intervention services to support these increases is not discussed.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	20	15

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;

(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and

(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(4)**

The state has made some progress in implementing a family engagement strategy, and presents a strong plan for refining and expanding the strategies in key areas, such as increasing the number of professionals trained in the Strengthening Families framework, and the development of two web-based tools to empower families with information needed to engage more fully with their children's education. Although the inclusion of a plan to expand the Reach Out and Read program may not be a good fit for this criterion (see (c) below), it does not detract from the state's ability to sufficiently present a strong plan which does meet the requirements of this section. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium range. \*\*\* (a) The state has established a progression of increasingly stringent requirements for engaging families in their children's development and education. As detailed in the Program Standards for Keystone STARS, in order advance to higher STAR designations, programs have to promote the families' capacity for being involved- through conferencing, provision of information related to transition practices, activities to help meet the program's learning goals, and, at the highest level, parents are involved in planning and evaluation for the program. Although the state has established methods for parent engagement through the state-funded preschool and state-supplemented Head Start programs (most notably because these programs must align curriculum with the state Learning Standards, which include family engagement as a domain), it is not as clear that there is a progression of increasingly stringent requirements in programs not participating in TQRIS. \*\*\* (b) Although the state details progress already made in the area of training early childhood educators in family engagement (through the established trainer registry), the state's plan details an expansion of the Strengthening Families Framework and integration of the "protective factors" training into other programs. The state is building upon progress and expanding the best practices through other existing programs such as the technical assistance consultants, infant-toddler specialist framework, and the Children's Trust Fund grantees.\*\*\* (c) The state's plan for family engagement statewide will be implemented through the proposed Family Engagement Project. Through community based teams convened to design a statewide strategy, stakeholders will build upon the early learning standards, program standards, and integrate the Strengthening Families framework. Teams will focus on community-based assessments of need in the area of family engagement. The state proposes that these teams will work to develop a web-based Community Scorecard, which would provide families and communities with assessment data, program ratings, and other important information that can facilitate family engagement with the selection of childcare setting. An additional web-based resource would be the Early Learning GPS- a method to guide parents with the information they need to make quality decisions for their families regarding early learning. The decision to focus on this project is well-conceived and responsive to a survey of parents that demonstrated a need for such a tool. Within this sub-criterion, the state proposes an expansion of the One Book Every Young Child Campaign and the Reach Out and Read program, for the purpose of introducing culturally and linguistically appropriate books to children along with information about engaging families in literacy-based activities. The One Book program has been successfully implanted across the state in high-needs programs such as state-funded preschool and state-supplemented Head Start programs. The state outlines a plan to implement this program in other high-needs (non-center based) settings such as foster care settings and public housing, a clear strength to this aspect of the program. The program and books will be supplemented with standards-based activities and materials for extension and involvement. By contrast, it is not well-defined how the Reach Out and Read program will target high-needs children, nor how this program is aligned with the important work completed to date in the state in terms of Learning Standards, Program Standards, or integration with other early childhood systems in the state. The rationale for the inclusion of this program (to which a substantial portion of the budget is dedicated) is not clear, as parents' skills in read-alouds was mentioned only briefly as a "gap" in family engagement services without any data to support the claim that this is a need across the state.

## D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	40	32
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--</p> <p>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;</p> <p>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and</p> <p>(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

### Comments on (D)(1)

Pennsylvania's plan to develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of increasing credentials is strong for educators working with preschool aged children, but can only be considered partially implemented due to a lack of inclusion of infant-toddler educators in key areas. The state's plans to continue efforts to monitor and refine the Core Body of Knowledge (CBK), and to enhance the framework for educators of infants and toddlers are strong and well-developed because they builds on existing successes and further coordinate the continuum of professional development for early educators. Existing resources to promote the appropriate use of the framework (supports for students in higher education, companion documents, guidance for scoring within the career lattice) will be enhanced through streamlining of data management systems (allowing administrators and advisors to appropriately guide individuals through the framework) and stronger partnerships with postsecondary institutions (further integrating modules of professional development and increasing consistency of information). For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-high range.\*\*\* (a) The state has developed and partially implemented a statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Modeled after state and national best practice, the framework is evidence-based and aligns with learning standards and teacher preparation guidelines across the state to promote consistency and demonstrate a commitment to promoting positive learning outcomes for children. The framework addresses content areas required for a high quality set of competencies: assessment systems, and cultural and linguistic appropriateness in working with families, health, and behavior management. Although the state was able to demonstrate that the framework is comprehensive for the preschool age-group, it is less clear that the definition of Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework is met for early childhood educators working with infants and toddlers. The state's plan to expand the framework to fully meet the needs of educators working with infants and toddlers is strong because it builds on the existing frameworks structure and continues to coordinate and refine features to enhance usability. The existing framework entails a Core Body of Knowledge (competencies), a career lattice, and a data system consisting of multiple registries to track and monitor professional development. The framework is accompanied by several resources to enhance usability, such as guidance for consistent utilization of the career lattice credit calculations, the Professional Development Record to enhance reflection and planning for professional development, and a series of trainings on how to use the CBK, Professional Development Record, and Career Lattice tools.\*\*\* (b) Pennsylvania's progression of statewide credentials and degrees is the Keys to Professional Development, which supports educators as they move through the state's Career Lattice. The Career Lattice addresses multiple pathways to credentialing in multiple early education settings, and this lattice is aligned both with the Workforce Competencies and the progression of increasing standards that is built into the state's TQRIS (Keystone STARS). This lattice is presented in a simple format and identifies eight levels of education/qualifications across seven educational settings. The levels of increasing credentials are also described in terms of progressing within a setting and establishes a framework for career advancement. The supporting resources (described in (a) above) lend strength to Pennsylvania's plan to further coordinate the use of this framework for infant-toddler educators.\*\*\* (c) Pennsylvania engages postsecondary institutions in the area of workforce competency alignment by advising on the development of the CBK and the director's credential competencies, by offering credentialing programs and negotiating articulation agreements, and by offering alignment activities between early learning programs and public school administrators. The state's plan to enhance partnerships with postsecondary institutions includes the integration of modules for professional development on the CBK designed to help providers move through the Career Lattice and associated levels in the Keystone STARS program. Plans to increase use of modules by institutions of higher education include translating the information into asynchronous and online learning opportunities. Pennsylvania's effort to support early educators in attaining Bachelor's degrees is evident through the creation of the Gate Opener project, a responsive program created to meet the needs of working adults facing barriers to returning to higher education. Building on this success, the state plans to develop Career Advising Competencies to educate administrators, technical assistance consultants, and faculty members about providing these students with the knowledge and support

needed to move through the Career Lattice.

### E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (E)(1)

The state has developed a plan to implement statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (called the Keystone Kindergarten Inventory) by SY2014-15. The state's proposal describes that this inventory is minimally implemented through a pilot in 24 schools. Although the state is piloting the assessment, there is a lack of evidence related to the pilot; the proposal does not contain any actual materials (for example, a copy of the draft assessment or training materials) related to the pilot. However, the state has a prior history of commitment to standards-based assessment and an existing infrastructure to incorporate outcomes information into the statewide data management system to track children's progress through the early elementary years, which are strengths. For these reasons, this section is scored in the medium-low range. \*\*\* (a) The state's plan is well situated to build on a history of authentic assessments with strong data reporting procedures. Pennsylvania's plan to organize the assessment efforts across the state to create a common Kindergarten Inventory makes sense- common outcomes reporting will allow for comparison across districts, appropriate allocation of resources, and more informed policy decision-making. However, a description of the inventory (even in its pilot version) is not provided. According to the state's narrative (and a very brief outline in the Appendix) the Kindergarten Inventory aligns with the Learning Standards for the state (which have been shown to address all Essential Domains of School Readiness). However, this is not well-outlined and it is not clear whether the Inventory represents a single checklist or a menu of options from which districts may choose. The state mentions a draft instrument in some sections, and in others refers to guiding districts in the selection of tools and assessment approaches. This lack of clarity is a weakness.\*\*\* (b) The state's plan does reference a particular tool to be used with ELL populations (the WIDA), which would be appropriate for the named population, and references the current use of Work Sampling Online programs already in place in state-funded preschool and Head Start programs. Although information on reliability of implementation and reporting is discussed, as well as validity in the sense of aligning the Inventory to the Learning Standards, there is not much data presented on psychometric properties of existing assessments nor the process of establishing such data for the draft form of the assessment (whatever form it may take). A general lack of specificity weakens this sub-criterion.\*\*\* (c) The state's plan to roll out the Keystone Kindergarten Inventory through a series of increasingly comprehensive pilots with built in reflection, analysis, and refinement periods is strong. This thoughtful plan will ensure that the state has the capacity and appropriate training and supports to implement the Inventory comprehensively. \*\*\* (d) Integration of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment data into the statewide longitudinal system is a clear strength because the portal is one that teachers and administrators are already familiar and comfortable with, it is able to be linked to elementary systems, and can be enhanced to provide information in user-friendly formats to a variety of stakeholders (families, teachers, administrators, policymakers). \*\*\* (e) The state's plan outlines their intention to utilize existing data systems structures, paired with federal dollars (not RTT-ELC funding) to link early learning childhood data systems with elementary data systems. However, the state's plan is to use RTT-ELC funding to develop the Kindergarten Entry Assessment itself. Budget tables indicate that a very small proportion of RTT-ELC funding is dedicated for this purpose. Since

there is very little specificity regarding what developing the inventory will entail, it is difficult to discern whether this funding amount will be sufficient.

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	16

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--

- (a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- (b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- (c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;
- (d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and
- (e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

The state's plan to build on existing data systems to increase communication between networks, increase efficiency for users, and enhance the interface to provide more userfriendly outputs is strong. However, it is not clear that the state's plan meets all of the requirements for Data System Oversight, and for these reasons, this section is scored in the medium high range.\*\*\* (a) Pennsylvania's existing data management system meets each of the federal requirements of essential data elements excepting the ability to monitor rates of suspensions and expulsions. The state's plan to enhance the system is to add an element within the attendance and enrollment feature of the existing system to enter the reason for termination of enrollment (which would capture information on expulsion). It is less clear how this would capture information about suspensions, but this is still a strong plan that meets nearly every requirement for essential data elements.\*\*\* (b) The existing PELICAN system is already used statewide to enter unique child, educator, and provider identifiers, as well as demographic information. The integrated Early Learning Network system collects information on program level and child level outcomes (all TQRIS data points and child learning outcomes). Entry procedures and trainings are already in-use and well-established.\*\*\* (c) Many strong and comprehensive linkages already exist across a variety of early learning programs, early intervention services, and the TQRIS. The state plans to use grant funding to enhance connections between early learning programs and the K-12 data management systems, called the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) Virtual Bridge, using common unique identifiers between systems and incorporating the Keystone Kindergarten Inventory as the anchor between these two data systems. \*\*\* (d) One of the largest enhancements included in the state's plan is to create a more user-friendly set of outputs to promote usability of the data that is being collected across the states (currently the reporting is primarily in the form of raw data, which is less useful to practitioners). These more usable data outputs are designed to provide families, providers, and administrators with information about programs' ability to prepare children for kindergarten and track their success moving forward. For example, providers will be able to view outcomes for children leaving their care as they move through benchmarks in early elementary school, including outcomes at third grade. The description of "dashboard" tools is focused on making the interface usable and productive for a variety of clients to enhance learning opportunities for young children. Further, the state outlined a plan for enhancing mobile communication and reporting capabilities, particularly for Early Intervention specialists working in direct service with programs. These mobile tools would enhance productivity among employees, enhance the quality of services provided, and enhance the quality of data entered into the electronic management system. \*\*\* (e) The PELICAN system is described as confidential, and procedures are in place to delink personally identifiable information from the unique identifiers for children, educators, or providers. Other security procedures include encrypted servers, unique usernames and passwords, varied security levels depending on roles for users, and releasing only aggregate data. Reference was made to a privacy policy, but there was not sufficient explanation needed to determine if it meets the requirement for Data System Oversight Requirements.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	280	203

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
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**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System**

10

3

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (P)(2)**

(a) The state's plan does not address expanding the reach of licensing to include all programs in this sub-criterion, nor does the state indicate that this policy is already in place (although it does comment on expanding the data system for different types of child care programs).\*\* (b) The state's plan focuses primarily on expanding the data management and entry system which supports the TQRIS in this state. This expansion would support the inclusion of new types of programs within the Keystone STARS program (such as state-funded preschool classrooms, licensed nurseries, and special education programs). However, the state never explicitly references an intention to attempt to include all programs in the TQRIS. The state's goals for participation do not reflect this intention. And, within criterion B section, the state's application refers to the participation level statewide as "stabilized" due to the age of the program-- indicating that it is not expected that participation will increase to include all programs.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	<b>0 or 10</b>	<b>No</b>
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met, or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
<b>Comments on (P)(3)</b>		
<p>The state does not demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment by meeting all elements in Table (A)(1)-12, nor does the state's proposal earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for (E)(1).</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
<b>Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	

#### Comments on Absolute Priority

Overall, the state's plan is constructed to comprehensively meet the needs of all children, including children with high needs. The strongest areas of the state's proposal lie in its significant progress in establishing a common, statewide TQRIS, Early Learning Standards that are integrated across state-funded early learning programs, a comprehensive approach to family engagement, and extremely strong data management and analysis plans for measuring and utilizing child outcome and program quality information. Although the state does not always maximize the rationale to target children with high needs, each plan is sufficiently comprehensive of ALL children and inclusive of all state-funded programs (state-funded preschool, state-supplemented Head Start), which serve exclusively high needs children.



Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Review

Technical Review Form Page



Application # PA-5031

Peer Reviewer: [Redacted]
Lead Monitor: [Redacted]
Support Monitor: [Redacted]
Application Status: Reviewed
Date/Time: 11/16/2011 - 8:20 PM

CORE AREAS (A) and (B)

States must address in their application all of the selection criteria in the Core Areas.

A. Successful State Systems

Table with 3 columns: Core Area, Available, Score. Row 1: (A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development, 20, 20. Includes sub-points (a) through (d) regarding financial investment, participation numbers, and program quality.

Scoring Rubric Used: Quality

Comments on (A)(1)

a) Pennsylvania's application clearly documented the financial commitment to providing high quality early education programs for children with high needs. The information documented progress in investments over the past 10 years that spans three different administrations. The state is currently committing over \$1.3 billion to Early Learning and Development programs. Even with the economic downturn the reductions in the early childhood budget were less than the average reductions for other state funded programs. Appendix (A)(1)-1 documents a chronology of investments in early learning over time. Appendix(1)-2 the Office of Early Learning and Development Annual Report states that since 2002, Pennsylvania has moved from one of nine states to offer no publicly funded Pre-Kindergarten to one of the nation's leaders. State funds have decreased from 2009 to 2011 which is a reflection of the economic challenges in states. This decrease over the past few years does raise concerns as to commitment. (b) Based on the data contained in Table (A)(1)-5 Pennsylvania has increased the number of children served in the different types of programs by 163,762 since 2007, a 20% increase over time. The highest increases were in programs funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, programs funded by Title of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and programs receiving Child Care Development Funds(CCDF). Pennsylvania documented information as to the numbers of children that meet the definition of high needs. Table (A)(1)-2 identifies children with disabilities, English learners, children residing on Indian lands, homeless, in foster care and children living in poverty. The highest percentages are children living in poverty (58%) with the next highest percentage, children with disabilities (9.5%). Pennsylvania administers nine Early Learning and Development programs to address the gap in kindergarten readiness with over three fourths of the programs providing supports for children with high needs. Descriptions of the programs are included in the application. (c) Pennsylvania initiated work on an early childhood education system over ten years ago when they were selected to participate in the national BUILD Initiative. They have all of the areas that form the building blocks a high quality early learning and development system in place or in process. The application states that that 2004 began to focus on increased investments and policies to increase access to quality Early Learning and Development programs. These commitments included: establishing two new funding streams; fully implementing the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Model; introducing Keystone STARS; and establishing a federal funded



Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program. Additional policy and initiatives are documented in Appendix (A)(1)-1. (d) Pennsylvania has implemented Early Learning and Development Standards for programs serving children birth through 3rd grade that include the essential domains of school readiness, as evidenced in Table (A)(1)-6; the comprehensive assessment system includes the required elements but does not apply to all of the early childhood development programs, Table (A)(1)-7; family engagement strategies are required in all of the state funded programs; the family engagement and health promotion practices are integrated into the Keystone STARS program performance standards, the early learning standards, state licensing requirements and the workforce development competency framework. The Kindergarten Entry Assessment is in the pilot phase, includes all of the essential domains of school readiness and is aligned to the Early Learning and Development Standards. The application states that Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN) is the only state system that currently meets all 10 fundamentals of coordinated state Early Learning and Development systems identified by the Early Childhood Data Collaborative. The network of subsystems in PELICAN manages data for Pre-K Counts, Keystone STARS, Child Care Works Subsidy, Provider Certification, Head Start and Early Intervention. PELICAN also includes an Early Learning Network subsystem designed to guide instruction, inform state policies, and increase efficiencies across all programs overseen by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. With the state's significant investments over time they have improved the quality of services through three core Early Learning and Development programs: Keystone STARS, Pre-K Counts, and Head Start. Keystone STARS reversed a 10-year trend of declining quality as documented in a 2006 evaluation conducted by Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pittsburgh. The study showed improvements in child care quality overall based on average Environment Rating Scale (ERS) scores between 2002 and 2006. Pre-K Counts, Head Start and Keystone STARS classroom have shown a seven year trend in improving classroom quality, as shown through increasing scores on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales-Revised (ECERS-R). Pennsylvania has also successfully increased outcomes for children enrolled in Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program and Keystone STAR 3 and 4 programs. Data shown from 2010-2011 showed that children are progressing throughout the year and are entering kindergarten ready to learn. Each program showed a significant increase, from fall to spring, in the percentage of preschoolers with age appropriate language, math and social skills. In addition, Pennsylvania created the Office of Child Development and Early Learning in 2007, to create a cohesive organizational structure for all of the state's Early Learning and Development programs. The state has demonstrated that it has a solid foundation for launching an ambitious plan to increase access to high quality early education for families in high-risk communities, improve instruction in early education classrooms, refine the alignment between early childhood education and documenting the number of children entering kindergarten with age-appropriate skills. Pennsylvania has included all of the evidence requested in Tables (A)(1)-1 through 13 and described in the narrative the information that met the criteria. Additional information was provided in the Appendices that provided supporting documentation to warrant a rating of a high-quality response.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(2) Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.</b>	20	17

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes--

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers;

(b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

#### Comments on (A)(2)

(a) Pennsylvania's vision is taking children, families, and communities to the top by ensuring all children, including those with high needs enter Kindergarten ready to succeed and to sustain achievement through the elementary grades. They have outlined three ambitious but achievable goals that build on their current financial and structural investments in the systems to ensure long-term success and sustainability. The first goal is to improve program quality and increase efficiency. To achieve this goal, Pennsylvania plans to use RTT-ELC funds to maximize the use of data collected by: developing a provider dashboard and management tools that will provide new information that programs can use to guide quality improvements; benchmarking the education and retention levels early childhood educators will help administrators with knowing what professional development and supports needed; and providing families and communities with a school readiness scorecard to help families find appropriate programs and let communities help communities identify needed program improvements. The second goal is improving outcomes for children, especially children with high needs. While the state has made progress in documenting child outcomes for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in select high quality programs and has evidence that children in these programs are making progress through the school year, this includes only 15% of young children in the state and provides no baseline against which the state can evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. With RTT-ELC funds, Pennsylvania plans to establish a birth to 8 continuums for learning standards, career development, and standards-based child outcome reporting. The integration of the early learning standards into the K-12 standards framework will improve the consistency of educational expectations. The third goal is to close the achievement gap. The creation of Keystone STARS, Pre-K Counts and the Head

Start Supplemental program increased the number of quality early education program options for high needs families. However, fewer than 25% of the programs participating in Keystone STARS are in the top tiers of program quality STAR levels 3 or 4. With funding from RTT-ELC, Pennsylvania plans to increase both the number of high quality programs and the number of high-needs children enrolled in top tiers. The plan is to expand Keystone STARS to include school-based Pre-K Counts providers, Early Intervention services, school-based Pre-K programs and licensed nursery schools. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning will crosswalk each program's standards with STARS program standards and establish minimum health and safety standards and eliminate duplication of reporting and oversight across programs. This strategy will increase participation on Keystone STARS by approximately 25% by 2016. In addition, case management will be enhanced for Family Child Care Home providers and technical assistance for centers. This strategy will ensure that at least 305 centers and 252 family child care homes move up one or more STAR levels. To increase the access to high quality programs RTT-ELC funds will be used to help Early Learning and Development Programs provide better information to families about options available to them; and help health, child welfare and school districts in high risk communities increase their capacity to serve families and better coordinate family supports offered. (b) Pennsylvania has outlined a solid reform agenda that makes sense in relationship to the progress made in their system building thus far. They have outlined their gaps and challenges for each of the quality components and cross walked how each plan addresses one of the three goals. (c) Pennsylvania will address three of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C).(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high quality Early Learning and Development Standards. Selecting these criteria will move beyond the alignment of the early learning standards, birth through 2nd grade, to integration of the early learning standards and tools into the K-12 standards framework. This will improve the consistency of educational expectations of children from early education through elementary education and facilitate better collaboration between early educators and elementary teachers, leading to smoother transitions to kindergarten and sustained progress for children in the elementary grades. (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems. Selecting these criteria will make information more accessible across programs and reduce the duplication of assessments for children enrolled in multiple programs. (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families. While Pennsylvania has developed standards for family engagement and have multiple initiatives, all of the efforts will be coordinated into a statewide strategy in the State Plan. There is also recognition that building the capacity of high-risk communities will be realized in increased access to support services and program improvement, Family engagement is one of the important strategies for achieving the goal of increasing access to high-quality programs. (D)(1) Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. Pennsylvania has a career lattice, a Core Body of Knowledge for early childhood educators, three credentials and partnerships with higher education to increase access for early childhood educators. Selecting these criteria will enhance the data systems to collect and analyze data on the status of all early childhood educators in the state to determine professional development needs and link educator quality with improved child outcomes. (E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at Kindergarten entry. The state has not developed a statewide framework for Kindergarten assessment. The plan is to develop a common outcomes reporting framework to better gauge school readiness, compare statewide data across districts, allocate and prioritize resources and inform policy. (E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services and policies. Having developed an integrated system, Pennsylvania is looking to broaden the current uses of data that will be of use by programs to inform practice and operations. Pennsylvania has provided rationales to justify the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area. Pennsylvania has included the appropriate evidence and described it in the narrative to successfully meet all of the criteria to warrant a high-quality response. Additional information was provided in the Appendices that provided supporting documentation. With Pennsylvania's overarching focus for reform on enhancing data analysis and reporting objectives to ensure programs will have access to the necessary technology how this new data will improve outcomes for children with high needs is not specifically addressed.

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation and commitment in the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability and describing--

- (1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;
- (2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;
- (3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and
- (4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant.

(b) Demonstrating that the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU or

other binding agreement between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a), including by obtaining--

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, civil rights, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; and postsecondary institutions.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (A)(3)**

(a)The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), established in 2007, which has a deputy secretary who oversees both the Departments of Education and Public Welfare. OCDEL has a demonstrated history of working collaboratively with state agencies and stakeholders on an ongoing basis. OCDEL, and the Departments of Education, Public Welfare and Health are the state agencies that form the governance structure. The Pennsylvania Early Learning Council, the State Interagency Coordinating Council and the Early Learning Investment Commission are the other key participants who comprise the governance structure. OCDEL will serve as the lead agency for the RTT-ELC grant. The deputy secretary of the OCDEL will coordinate all grant related activities, with oversight from the Governor's Office and the Secretaries of Education and Public Welfare. The OCDEL already has specific and effective ways for participating state agencies and stakeholders to work together and communicate with one another. Planning, problem-solving and issues will be resolved in multiple meetings at the Governor's Cabinet, in the Secretaries' Executive Team meetings, in Deputy Secretaries' meetings with Bureau Directors and in individual meetings between Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries and the Deputy Secretary and Bureau Directors. The highest level of oversight will come from the weekly meetings of the Governor's Cabinet, which comprises the Secretaries of all the key state agencies. The Deputy Secretary and OCDEL leaders meet with and are advised by Directors of Policy, Legislative Affairs, Press, General Counsel, and Administration of both Education and Public Welfare. The OCDEL Deputy Secretary will report on the RTT-ELC grant activities and progress at each of the meetings of the Early Learning Council, the State Interagency Coordinating Council and the Early Learning Investment Commission. In addition, a general overview in the governance structure for OCDEL, participating state agencies and other entities is included in the application Table (A)(3)-1. Decisions regarding statewide policy will require the consent of the Governor's Office. Operational decisions will be made with guidance and approval of the Secretary of Education or Public Welfare, both of whom will receive regular updates from OCDEL regarding progress and plans to ensure fully-informed decisions about grant funded activities. A process for dispute resolution is clearly defined within each MOU and entails a collaborative process, followed by an enforcement process as appropriate to the situation. (b) The Early Learning Council (ELC) will continue to provide input and feedback to OCDEL regarding the plan through its three annual meetings and through the work of its subcommittees. There is a signed MOU outlining the ELC roles and responsibilities regarding the state plan. The State Interagency Coordinating Council will continue to provide input and feedback to OCDEL regarding the plan through its 6 annual meetings and through communication with the Secretaries and Deputy Secretary. Evidence is contained in their Letter of Support included in the Appendix. The Departments of Education, Public Welfare and Health have demonstrated their commitment in the signed MOUs contained in the application. Each MOU includes terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the agency's existing funding to the support the State Plan and Scope-of-Work as it relates to each required criterion in the proposal. Each MOU also describes recourse in the event of any parties' failure to perform their agree-upon duties and responsibilities. (c) Letters of Support are included from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and a broad range of stakeholder groups, including businesses, foundations, education organizations, institutions of higher education and other organization. It is clear from the MOUs and the letters of support that there is enthusiastic support for the Early Learning and Development reforms and confidence in the state to implement those reforms. The High Quality Plan for aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the state includes all of the required components. Each element of the selection criteria is implemented.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.	15	13

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration and State Advisory Council funding; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

- (1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;
- (2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and
- (3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (A)(4)**

(a) Budget Table I-1 documents that existing federal and state funds will be used in conjunction with the RTT-ELC funds. Of the total budget of \$106.4M, \$40.9M is from other sources. The RTT-ELC requested funds for data usage and analytics will be used in concert with Pennsylvania's annual allocation of over \$26M dedicated to early learning data. The RTT-ELC requested funds to expand the Keystone STARS program will be used in concert with Pennsylvania's annual allocation of \$57.8M to support provider financial rewards, professional development, technical assistance, environmental ratings and other STARS related initiatives. Pennsylvania's application states that private funds from foundations will support family engagement strategies in concert with RTT-ELC funds. The State Advisory Council will be available to support the reforms targeted for data usage and analytics, child outcomes and parent engagement. (b) Pennsylvania has identified eight projects that taken together will result in full implementation of the high quality plan and achieve the goals in the reform agenda. Budget Table I-3 provides a budget summary by project. Promoting Child Outcomes aligns with Core Area C(1) and C(2). Family Engagement projects align with Core Area C(4). Workforce Effectiveness projects align with Core Area D(1). 21st Century Reports projects align with Core Areas C(4) and E(2). The Keystone Framework project aligns with Core Areas C(1) and E(1). Funds are set aside for technical assistance as required by RTT-ELC grant. Pennsylvania also wrote to Invitational Priority 4 to work with a research institution to further analyze their data sets for early childhood to determine effects in the elementary grades. The Budget Tables II-1 for both Education and Public Welfare include costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the goal and objectives in the High Quality Plan. The accompanying budget narrative provide the detail as to how the funds will be used. Budget Table I-1 documents that \$16.M will be allocated to localities, and other partners identified in the budget narratives. (c) The application states, that once the projects are complete the state will be able to maintain the systems through its current operating budget, without additional support, and through reallocating existing funds. The application also speaks to sustaining the RTT-ELC funded activities by maintaining and expanding stakeholder commitments and leveraging private support. Pennsylvania's budget describes costs that are both reasonable and necessary for the projects described. However, there are two areas of concern. It is not clear from the budget tables or the narrative that \$1.8M is adequate to support the development and implementation of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The application states that Longitudinal Data System funding will be available in 2013 which is an unrealistic time frame for fully implementing the new assessment tool and framework in 2014. Another area of concern is in regard to local programs being able to fully cover the costs of authentic child observations from a 3rd party vendor at the end of the grant. Assuming local providers will have the resources to sustain this effort is unrealistic and inconsistent with the sustainability strategies outlined in the application.

**B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs**

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	10	10

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;

- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;
- (4) Family engagement strategies;
- (5) Health promotion practices; and
- (6) Effective data practices;

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(1)**

(a) Pennsylvania has a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in place with program standards that meet the federal definition for program standards. Keystone STARS has developed a specific set of program standards for child care centers, family child care homes and group homes. The STARS standards are aligned with and reference Pennsylvania's Early Childhood Learning Standards. The Learning Standards cover all of the essential domains of school readiness, are developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate and provide guidance for activities to support early learning in classrooms and at home. More intensive use and integration of the standards is required at each successive level of the Keystone STARS system. A STAR 1 site must maintain a copy of the standards but a STAR 2 must use the standards for classroom planning and documentation of children's learning. For each of the four STAR levels, the system differentiates increasingly higher program requirements for incorporating the state's early learning standards as a resource for curriculum planning, using standards aligned child observations and assessment tools and using the Environment Rating Scale checklists to measure the quality of the classroom environment. At STARS level 3 and 4 programs must use an authentic assessment and measure each child's progress across the essential domains of school readiness. The STARS standards in the Staff Qualification and Professional Development Domains require practitioners to evaluate their skills, knowledge and academic background against the state's Core Body of Knowledge (Workforce Competencies Framework) and establish an annual professional development plan that builds on strengths and fills gaps. (b) Standards differentiate increasingly stringent program requirements for educator and director education levels and credentials and professional development activities. For each of the STAR levels, Keystone STARS differentiates increasingly stringent program requirements for efforts to provide families with community resources, involve families in programs, and promote smooth transitions. Depending on the STAR level there are different requirements for documenting parent communications. Programs at STAR 2 and above are also required to present a list of local early learning programs, school districts and community groups. A 2010 Parent Satisfaction Survey indicated that over 7,000 parents of children in a STAR 3 or 4 rated program indicated at least a 96% satisfaction with the range of quality measures being used. For each of the four STAR levels, the STAR system differentiates increasingly stringent program requirements for standard measures of business practices, staff communications and support, employee compensation, and continuous quality improvements. STAR specialists who are specifically trained to work with the Keystone STARS providers conduct reviews of program documents to determine each program's level of compliance with the program standards requirements. Classrooms, program and state level data is collected through the PELICAN Keys to Quality and the Early Learning Network database management system. This system helps the OCDEL identify technical assistance and professional development needs of providers serving high needs and high risk children. The Keystone STARS system differentiates program quality requirements at four increasing levels of quality. STARS levels 1-4, in four areas of practice: Staff Qualification and Professional Development; Learning Program; Family and Community Partnerships; and Leadership and Management. The standards are both clear and measurable. This differentiation of the program quality standards across the different types of programs is documented in Appendices (A)(1)6a, 6b, and 6c. (c) The Keystone STARS standards build on the regulatory standards for each program type. Pennsylvania has child care regulatory requirements on which the Keystone STARS builds its health and safety guidelines, emergency preparedness and staff-child ratios. The High Quality Plan for continuing to implement Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS includes all of the required components and addresses the selection criteria with approaches that are feasible and have a high probability of successful implementation.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by—

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;
- (3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA;

(4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of the ESEA; and

(5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(2)**

(a) Keystone STARS is a voluntary program. The goal for Pennsylvania is to increase the number of programs rated by including programs not currently participating. The programs targeted for inclusion are school-based providers and school-funded programs, early intervention programs, private preschool and state funded programs that do not provide child care. Currently, 103 Head Start/Early Head Start programs and 4,252 child care programs participate in Keystone STARS. (b) The application does not provide written information to address policies and practices that will be implemented to help more families afford higher quality programs. A strength of the proposal is to use RTT-ELC funds to include STAR level information in the data system as a way of tracking the number of children receiving early intervention services at each STAR level. This data will help families make informed choices in choosing a program to meet the needs of their child and inform state as to professional development and technical assistance needs to increase the number of rated programs providing early intervention services. (c) The goal is to increase the participation of licensed nursery school programs, school-based Pre-K and school-based Pre-K Counts not currently tracked through the PELICAN information management system. By the end of 2016, the STARS program will include 95% of Pre-K Counts programs, 45% of Head Start and Early Head Start programs, 100% of Early Intervention programs, 56% of state funded children care programs and 10% of private licensed nursery school programs. These targets include school-based Pre-K programs funded locally or through Title 1, school-based Pre-K Counts programs and Early Intervention programs funded through IDEA Part B. Table (B)(2)(3) provides a description of the annual targets for these programs. The participation targets set are achievable as reflected in the allocations noted in the project budget Table II-2 for the participating state agencies. But considering how long the program has been in operation, the targets are not ambitious. The greatest percentage of children enrolled are in programs receiving CDFF funds and the increase in participation is basically flat, only 7 of the 45 Title 1 funded programs and 10 of the 574 licensed nurseries will be added over the next 5 years. Since this is a voluntary system it is not clear in application as to the process that will be used for providing incentives or policies that require participation to reach the goal of having all publicly funded programs participating in Keystone STARS, especially for children with developmental delays or disabilities.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs</b>	15	13

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(3)**

(a) The Keystone STARS program is available state wide, however, not all early learning and development programs participate at this time. Section (B)(2) described the plan for expansion to include licensed nursery programs, school-based Pre-K and school-based Pre-K Counts programs. Currently, the process and tools the OCDEL uses to monitor program quality and provider compliance with STARS are comprehensive and thorough. Highly trained STARS Designators make regular site visits and site renewal visits every other year, unless a program is experiencing a change in circumstances or is seeking a higher STAR rating. OCDEL has a system in place to ensure the consistency of its designation process by establishing inter-rater reliability for the designators who determine whether providers meet performance standards. There is an equally extensive process for introducing new designators into the process. All of these practices were completed during a Designator Reliability Pilot initiated in 2009. What is not clear from the information provided is evidence as to how the standards or designator monitoring tools were changed based on the findings of the pilot. The application states that there are

procedures to ensure the inter-rater reliability of 93% of the reliability assessments conducted by the independent ERS assessor, but there is no evidence as to how that is achieved. (b) The key mechanism for giving families access to rating and licensing information is being implemented in two ways. They can access the information through the COMPASS website. For families who do not have internet access the information can be obtained through the Child Care Information Services offices or the Local Education and Resource Network teams. Information is needed to address how families, who do not have access to the internet or do not typically interact with the the Child Care Information Services will access rating and licensing information. The state is implementing a rating and monitoring the quality of early learning and development programs participating in Keystone STARS. Information as to how the results of the pilot informed the process and tools is not provided. The goal of collecting pre and designation information in the Designator Reliability database for family child care home providers is a logical next step in the work.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs</b>	20	18

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (B)(4)**

(a) Pennsylvania has policies and practices in place that provide incentives and support for programs to continuously improve. The research conducted in 2009-10 found that a higher percentage of STARS providers receiving technical assistance moved up at least one STAR level than did providers who did not receive TA. To help meet the needs of low-income children, subsidy enhancements are offered to the STARS rated Child Care Works programs, adding to the daily child care rate. This add on helps to pay for higher quality early learning experiences. (b) The Child Care Information Services offices are the mechanism for providing supports to working families who have children with high needs. A concerted effort is also being made to ensure more children with developmental delays and disabilities are receiving services in STARS rated programs. This has increased the number of children with delays or disabilities receiving services in typical early childhood settings. To address the goal of increasing programs and enrollment in the top tiers, the High Quality Plan will focus on increasing participation among programs serving high needs children and those in high risk communities and other program types not currently participating. To support this goal a Center-based STARS Coaching project and Family Child Care Home Mentoring project will be created with RTT-ELC funding. The effectiveness of both projects will be evaluated prior to taking them to scale. Adequate funding for these projects is outlined on Table I-3 and explained in the budget narrative for Expanding Keystone STARS. The OCDEL, state and regional Keystone staff, and the family child care mentors roles and responsibilities for the two projects are identified in the High Quality Plan. (b) The Child Care Information Services offices, funded by the CCDF Block Grant, offer resource and referral services to parents by helping them choose a quality early learning program, provide information about Keystone STARS and offer targeted referrals to community services based on the needs of families. Through their work with families the state has increased the number of TANF families using regulated care by 44%. To support the needs of families with children with developmental delays or disabilities, Keystone STARS provides additional resources to STARS programs that enroll children receiving early intervention services. (c) Table (B)(4) documents the targets for decreasing the STAR 3 and 4 rated programs. The application states that the average increase in the number of providers at STAR 3 and 4 is about 3%. The proposed target in the application is to increase the number of providers in the STARS program by 20% overall, Table (B)(4)(c)(1), with an increase of approximately 5% at STAR 3 and 2% at STAR 4. This increase in the number of rated providers would increase the number of high needs children enrolled in rated programs by approximately 48%, Table (B)(4)(c)(2). These are ambitious and achievable goals based on the activities and financial resources outlined in Budget Table I-3 and the supporting narrative.

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.</b>	15	15

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), whether the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality**

**Comments on (B)(5)**

(a) Pennsylvania has completed multiple validation studies regarding the Keystone STARS technical assistance, designator reliability, family satisfaction and implications for awards. The University of Pittsburgh, Office of Child Development examined the fidelity of STARS implementation and the impact on program quality at three different points in time. After each study OCDEL made improvements based on the feedback and recommendations of the evaluators. By the time the third study was done in 2006, with 4,044 regulated providers, evaluators found that the STAR ratings were completed reliably, and that there was system wide improvement in quality among participating centers. In 2010, OCDEL conducted a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of Keystone STARS. The report presented analysis on the statistical associations between state supports, such as technical assistance, and provider quality outcomes, such as STAR movement. A critical indicator of success for the program is positive parent feedback. In 2010, 96% of parents whose children attended programs in the STAR Level 3 or 4 reported that they were pleased with their child's program. Another ongoing validation initiative is OCDEL's documentation of the empirical evidence for each research-based performance standard in Keystone STARS. OCDEL has developed a framework, entitled "Good, Better, Best" to articulate the basic requirements for each performance standard in order to establish greater consistency among Regional Key staff. The STARS system is further validated through the STARS Designation process. The process ensures that programs meet the program standards for STAR ratings. The Reliability Protocol also requires that Designators indicate the extent to which a performance standard has been met based along the continuum of quality in the Good, Better, Best framework. In 2010-11, the reliability check revealed that of those standards that were met, Designators agreed on 72.6% of the level of quality that the provider demonstrated on the Good, Better, Best framework. Beginning in 2009-2010 OCDEL collected enrollment data for children enrolled in programs at STAR Levels 3 and 4 in the Early Learning Network data system. OCDEL has analyzed the child outcome data to determine whether there was a relationship between higher levels of provider quality, as measured by STAR level, ERS scores, and staff qualifications, and residual gains in child outcomes. These analyses revealed significantly larger gains for children who attended programs with a higher STAR rating. The plan does not address the extent to which STARS protocols directly support better outcomes for children with high needs. (b) The RTT-ELC funds will be used in part to conduct a rigorous study as to whether the tiers accurately reflect differential levels of quality and whether the differentiated levels are related to child outcomes. A strength of the proposal is extending examination of child outcomes to include a sample of children participating in centers at STAR levels 1 and 2. In addition, the examination of contextual effects such as family demographics and community risk factors will provide an important insight as to affect on the impact of high quality programs on child outcomes. The High Quality Plan for validating the effect of STARS includes all of the required components and addresses the selection criteria with approaches that are feasible and have a high probability of successful implementation.

**Focused Investment Areas (C), (D), and (E)**

Each State must address in its application--

- (1) Two or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (C);
- (2) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (D); and
- (3) One or more of the selection criteria in Focused Investment Area (E)

The total available points for each Focused Investment Area will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address in that area, so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points.

**C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children**

The total available points that an applicant may receive for selection criteria (C)(1) through (C)(4) is 60. The 60 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address all four selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 15 points. If the applicant chooses to address two selection criteria, each criterion will be worth up to 30 points.

The applicant must address at least two of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (C), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	20	18



The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--

- (a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;
- (b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;
- (c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and
- (d) The State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(1)**

(a) The copy of the standards provide evidence that they apply to each of the age groups - infants, toddlers, preschoolers and kindergarteners. Copies of Pennsylvania's Learning Standards for Early Childhood in Appendices (A)(1)-4a,4b, and 4c document that all the essential domains of School Readiness are addressed in each age level. Appendix (C)(1)-2 Required Use of Standards in Early Learning and Development Programs documents the use of the Learning Standards by Keystone STARS. In each of the introductions by age group there is a consistent message regarding children with delays and disabilities and English Language Learners. The introduction of each set of standards speaks to the need to follow the IEP for children with disabilities. More specific information regarding cultural and linguistic appropriateness is documented in appendix (C)(1)-3 that highlights selected standards. Evidence is lacking regarding the process used to substantiate that the standards are research-based. Appendix (C)(1)-2 provides evidence regarding the types of programs required to use the standards as a part of the process of participating in Keystone STARS. There is a statement that revisions to the kindergarten and private nursery regulations will soon require them to use the learning standards. (b) SAS, the Standards Aligned System Portal for K-12 standards and the alignment of the early childhood reading, writing, speaking and listening, and math are in the process of being embedded in the K-12 is described in the narrative, however, no evidence is provided. However, when completed, this technology will provide a good way for early childhood educators to communicate and collaborate. In addition, the integration will draw attention to the essential domains of school readiness beyond academics. (c) Evidence is provided in a crosswalk to show how the early learning standards are incorporated into the Keystone STARS program standards, the comprehensive assessment system, and the workforce knowledge and competency framework. Pennsylvania contracted with Drs. Lynn Kagan and Catherine Scott-Little to conduct an alignment study of the degree of alignment between the early childhood standards and the K-12 standards. The alignment study also described the degree of alignment between the state's early learning standards and its early learning assessments. A copy of the study and findings are included in Appendix (C)(1)-5. (d) A clear explanation was given as to how individuals providing professional development require certification that document knowledge of the early learning standards and the integration into other components of the system. Appendices (A)(1)-9a and 9b provide evidence of the types of resource available to promote understanding of the early learning standards across programs and with parents.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.</b>	20	18

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to support the effective implementation of developmentally appropriate Comprehensive Assessment Systems by--

- (a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes;
- (b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purposes and uses of each type of assessment included in the Comprehensive Assessment Systems;
- (c) Articulating an approach for aligning and integrating assessments and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple Early Learning and Development Programs; and
- (d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs, and services.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(2)**

(a) Pennsylvania has a comprehensive assessment system in place and requires state funded Pre-K, Head Start and Early Intervention programs and programs in Keystone STARS tiers 3 and 4 to use it as shown in table (A)(1)-7. The Environment Rating Scale is being implemented as a valid and reliable measure of environmental quality. The Child Assessment Scoring System is the valid and reliable tool implemented to measure the quality of adult-child interactions. Programs are able to select the instruments for child assessment. Chart (C)(1)-3 in the appendix provide guidance on which assessment instruments are aligned to the early learning standards. The application addresses all of the elements of a comprehensive assessment system. The next steps of the proposed Keystone Child Outcomes Framework will align the multiple assessments that are currently being used will enable the providers to understand the developmental progress and needs of the children they serve and will enable the state-level administrators and policy makers to better understand the status of the state's children across a broad range of cognitive and non-cognitive domains. This will enable the state to monitor changes in the status of children's achievement and development over time and to inform policy. (b) The application speaks to a number of documents that provide programs with written guidance related to the components of the state's comprehensive assessment system. Evidence to support the efforts to deepen understanding of the purposes and uses is contained in the Standards Aligned Fact Sheet, Appendix (A)(1)-5 and key competencies outlined in the Core Body of Knowledge, Appendix (D)(1)-2. (c) PELICAN, Pennsylvania's comprehensive data collection system, manages data for Pre-K Counts, Keystone STARS, Child Care Works Subsidy, Provider Certification, Head Start and Early Intervention. The data is not only used to guide program instruction but also to inform state policies and increase efficiencies across all of these programs. PELICAN Early Intervention provides a mechanism for data-sharing between infant/toddler and preschool early intervention programs, limiting the need for duplicate assessments. For children enrolled in the other programs, the data sharing is implemented at the local level through agreements between community partners including families, early education programs and school districts. (d) The application states that numerous trainings are provided by the OCDEL on the components of the state's comprehensive assessment system. The trainings focus on the purposes and use of various assessments, how to appropriately administer and interpret assessments and how to use the assessment data to inform and improve instruction and program quality. Twenty trained instructors offer professional development on the Environment Rating Scale through the Pennsylvania training system. There are currently 849 instructors that are certified to offer training events on child assessment. Pennsylvania plans on strengthening its comprehensive assessment system in two ways: increase providers' understanding of the developmental progress and needs of the children they serve across a broad range of cognitive skills and increase their ability to adapt their instruction to meet group and individualized student needs and to monitor individual, class and program-wide achievement and gains over time; and ensure that the state and local decision-making is informed by data from a coordinated and cohesive valid and reliable comprehensive assessment system. To achieve these goal the state plan indicates that a Keystone Child Outcomes Framework will be developed and implemented. A partnership with the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics will deliver an educational curriculum on the use of childhood developmental screenings to 5,000 primary care providers and their staff statewide in 1,650 primary practices. In addition, the plan is to combine and refine available professional development on assessment into a comprehensive set of modules offered in a web-based format and incorporated in the system of professional development and higher education pre-service content. The High Quality Plan for supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessments includes all of the required components Documentation provides evidence that each of the selection criteria are implemented. The plan to increase providers' understanding of developmental needs of children and ensure state and local decision-making is informed by data is feasible and has a high probability of successful implementation.

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</b>	20	20

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development;

(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and

(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (C)(4)**

(a) Supporting evidence for a progressions of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement is contained in the Early Learning Standards for early childhood programs. Each level of the Early Learning Standards includes a "Partnership for Families and Communities" domain as noted in Appendix (A)(1)-4a,4b,4c. In addition, the Keystone STARS program standards require increasing levels of parent engagement as each successive STAR level as demonstrated in the standards in Appendices (A)(1)-6a,6b,6c. (b) The application states that the Pennsylvania early childhood training registry lists 615 instructors with expertise in family engagement provided over 600 professional development offerings on family engagement. The application states that in 2010-1140 instructors conducted two training sessions to over 800 in the research-based Protective Factors framework. The plan is to expand the trainer of trainer system to include a broader range of representatives from the various service systems in the community who serve children with high needs. However, no estimated number for expansion is provided. (c) The application states that a statewide Special Assistant is

employed to work early learning programs to strengthen family engagement efforts and supports through the Advisory Committee of the Early Learning Council. Other statewide efforts include promotion of family engagement efforts by the Local Education and Resource Network Teams and the Local Child Care Information Service and through the early intervention and home visiting programs. Evidence to support that Pennsylvania as a significant number of required family engagement strategies being implemented statewide can be found in table (A)(1)-9. The plan is to increase capacity of local communities by convening local teams to help develop and implement community based processes and tools to engage families of high needs children in their area. The teams will also develop and implement a formalized community-based family engagement assessment process, a key component of which will be creating a web-based Community Scorecard that will provide increased public access to a comprehensive collection of information. OCDEL will provide support and coaching during the implementation of these plans, including access to online learning community specific to family engagement, offering follow-up training, technical assistance and coaching, and developing additional products and resources needed. When completed the Family Engagement Project will have created a sustainable statewide strategy for family engagement along with models and tools that will be used after the grant funding. Another family engagement strategy is to provide families with high quality and culturally appropriate literacy materials. With RTT-ELC funding the plan is to expand its One Book Every Young Child Campaign. An annual book selection and corresponding take home resources will be provided to every child in the state's Head Start programs, homeless shelters and to children in early intervention and public Prek-K programs. In addition, with RTT-ELC funding, OCDEL will purchase thousands of new, culturally and age appropriate books for low income children, train members of the primary health care centers on Reach Out and Read, and recruit volunteers and transform the waiting rooms into literacy rich environments. OCDEL plans to develop the Early Learning Guiding Parents Smoothly (GPS) web-based tool. The GPS will help families identify the resources they need to provide them with information that will help them make informed choices, including information about health, safety and security, child development and choosing a high quality early learning program. The other tool to be developed is the Community Scorecard which will provide information on the status of young children and the programs and professionals that serve them. The Community Scorecard will offer family members outcome data from the K Entry Inventory and 3rd grade State Standardized Test scores. Community planners, policy-makers and schools will also be able to use this information to identify opportunities and challenges related to program access and child outcome gaps. The High Quality Plan for engaging and supporting families includes all of the required components and addresses the selection criteria with a focus on expanding family engagement strategies that have had documented success.

#### D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

The total points that a State may earn for selection criteria (D)(1) and (D)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (D), which are as follows.

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</b>	40	32
The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--		
(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;		
(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and		
(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (D)(1)

(a) Pennsylvania has partially implemented a comprehensive career development statewide system that includes a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework called Core Body of Knowledge (CBK). Evidence is provided to document a statewide progression of credential and degree opportunities aligned to the Core Body of Knowledge. What needs to be developed is a link that demonstrates the relationship of a high-quality workforce and improved child outcomes and lacks a credential of infant and toddler educators. The application provides a chart that documents how the CBK incorporates the early learning standards, comprehensive assessment systems, child development, health and culturally and linguistically appropriate family strategies and the knowledge areas specific to the federal definition of "Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework." A key goal in the plan is to expand the framework to focus on infants and toddlers. The plan also calls for enhancements to the workforce data systems. However, it is not explained as to how that data will be used to improve outcomes for children. (b) Pennsylvania's early educator career development system provides a clearly-articulated framework that both defines pathways tied to certification and supports educators as they move up the Career Lattice and with in the Keystone STARS. The Career Lattice defines multiple pathways for professional growth and development for early childhood educators across early childhood programs as well as public school districts, private schools, technical assistance consultants and instructors and higher education faculty. It identifies

qualifications, education and certification requirements for eight levels of growth, and defines the required number of early childhood credits for each level. A copy of the lattice is provided in Appendix (B)(1)-3. Evidence to support the alignment of post secondary institution with the CBK is found in table (A)(1)-11. RTT-ELC funding will be used to enhance the workforce and professional development registries to create a single comprehensive registry that contains all workforce data in one central location and makes the data accessible to early childhood program directors, regional and state program administrators and partners. OCDEL has targeted infant and toddler educators as the focus for new efforts to build a continuum of degrees and credentials and develop competencies and credentials for early intervention specialists and home visitors. (c) According to the documentation provided in Table (A)(1)-11 only approximately half of the institutions have aligned their programs with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. OCDEL plans to develop partnerships with post secondary institutions to align courses with the CBK for online courses, additional career-advising and to increase Career Lattice participation by undeserved educator populations identified in the Pennsylvania Reach and Risk Report 2011.

### E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

The total points an applicant may earn for selection criteria (E)(1) and (E)(2) is 40. The 40 points will be divided by the number of selection criteria that the applicant chooses to address so that each selection criterion is worth the same number of points. For example, if the applicant chooses to address both selection criteria under this Focused Investment Area, each criterion will be worth up to 20 points. If the applicant chooses to address one selection criterion, the criterion will be worth up to 40 points.

The applicant must address at least one of the selection criteria within Focused Investment Area (E), which are as follows:

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>
<p>The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that—</p> <p>(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;</p> <p>(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;</p> <p>(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;</p> <p>(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and</p> <p>(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant, (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of the ESEA).</p>		

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

#### Comments on (E)(1)

(a) Pennsylvania does not have a consistent statewide method by which to assess Kindergarten readiness and report early student achievement across all school districts. Pennsylvania plans to advance the current assessment work to develop and fully implement the Keystone Child Outcome Framework, a standards-based birth to age eight child outcome reporting that is anchored at Kindergarten entry, and mapped to multiple authentic assessments which teachers can use to measure children's development and progress and to report child outcomes to the state. (b) The application states that the proposed kindergarten entry tool, the Kindergarten Inventory will both guide educators in better understanding children's needs and targeting instruction to those needs and create a big picture understanding of kindergarten readiness across the state. The Kindergarten Inventory, will be aligned to the Early Learning Standards. The Inventory will not replace the classroom-level assessment tools districts currently use, but compile, align, and integrate data from those sources of evidence to create a standard and reliable picture of child outcomes at kindergarten entry. The Inventory will standardize the types of child data that districts report to the state. (c) The application states that a phased implementation of the tool is planned for Fall 2013 with full implementation by Fall 2014. This goal is achievable based on goal, objectives, key milestones and financial resources documented in the high-quality plan. (d) The application states that the kindergarten child outcomes that are entered in the the K-12 teacher portal will be linked to Pennsylvania Information Management System and PELICAN through the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) virtual bridge. The SLDS money will be used to link the child K entry outcome data to the SLDS. (e) The application states that other federal and grant funds will be used to support the kindergarten assessment system. The application states that \$3.8M in funding from the Longitudinal Data System grant will be used in 2013 to supplement the Kindergarten Inventory Work. It is not clear as to what that work is. In addition, the \$1.8M in RTT-ELC funds in the budget is not adequate to develop the Kindergarten Inventory and calibrate it to the Keystone Child Outcomes Framework.

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.</b>	20	16

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to enhance the State's existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System or to build or enhance a separate, coordinated, early learning data system that aligns and is interoperable with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and that either data system--

- (a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements;
- (b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs;
- (c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data;
- (d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making; and
- (e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (E)(2)**

(a) Pennsylvania's existing system collects and links all of the essential data elements except the ability to monitor suspensions and expulsions. (b) Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN) links data both within OCDEL and across state agencies. PELICAN uses a number of enterprise systems to uniquely identify and track consumers, providers and educators. These systems also standardize the collection of a minimum set of demographic data defining what information is mandatory and the manner in which it is captured and stored. (c) The application does not specifically address the application of Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data. (d) PELICAN has increased the efficiency of state programs and reduces fraud, waste and abuse by standardizing and automating activities such as eligibility determination, provider payment, receiving and tracking complaints against child care providers, maintaining waiting lists for services, and tracking grants and budgets. As a result of PELICAN, OCDEL is able to maintain strong program management, accountability and monitoring. PELICAN also has links to other systems within the Department of Public Welfare, such as, COMPASS, CIS and PROMISE. In 2007, the PELICAN Child Information Services (CCIS) assumed responsibility for all child care eligibility services, including those formerly completed by the Office of Income Maintenance for clients receiving TANF. Pennsylvania has a comprehensive early childhood system of assessment which is integrated into the state's unified data system, the Early Learning Network (ELN). The ELN integrates financial, program, teacher, family and child information. ELN also includes program and workforce data such as teacher qualifications, benefits and turnover rates; classroom quality rating scores; and a unique provider identifier, which is the same teacher identifier system used by other state systems. Child developmental outcomes come from the assessment data system, which feeds into the ELN. Pennsylvania is planning to broaden the current uses of the data system in data reporting to provide actionable information to the field by developing dynamic dashboards for practitioners. This will provide information to local teachers and administrators and provide them with real time data so they may continuously improve their performance to better meet the needs of the children they serve. (e) The plan does not speak to how the data system meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of federal, state and local privacy laws.

	Available	Score
<b>Total Points Available for Selection Criteria</b>	280	242

**Priorities**

Competitive Preference Priorities

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Including all Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</b>	10	0

Competitive Preference Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will receive points for this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30, 2015--

- (a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State

exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will score this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Scoring Rubric Used: **Quality and Implementation**

**Comments on (P)(2)**

(a) The plan does not state or provide evidence a licensing and inspection system that covers all programs will be implemented by June 30, 2015. The information provided in the narrative addresses expanding the existing Keys to Quality functionality within the integrated PELICAN system in order to enable the participation of additional early learning providers in Keystone STARS. (b) The application does not provide a plan or evidence to indicate how all licensed or regulated early learning and development programs will participate in Keystone STARS.

Priorities

	Available	Yes/No
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3: Understanding the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry</b>	<b>0 or 10</b>	<b>No</b>
<p>To meet this priority, the State must, in its application--</p> <p>(a) Demonstrate that it has already implemented a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that meets selection criterion (E)(1) by indicating that all elements in Status Table (A)(1)-12 are met; or</p> <p>(b) Address selection criterion (E)(1) and earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points available for that criterion.</p>		
<b>Comments on (P)(3)</b>		
<p>(a) Pennsylvania does not currently have a consistent method by which to assess kindergarten readiness and report early student achievement across all school districts (b) The applicant did not earn a score of at least 70 percent of the maximum points.</p>		

Absolute Priority

	Met? Yes/No
<b>Absolute Priority - Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs.</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<p>To meet this priority, the State's application must comprehensively and coherently address how the State will build a system that increases the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs so that they enter kindergarten ready to succeed.</p> <p>The State's application must demonstrate how it will improve the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs by integrating and aligning resources and policies across Participating State Agencies and by designing and implementing a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In addition, to achieve the necessary reforms, the State must make strategic improvements in those specific reform areas that will most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs. Therefore, the State must address those criteria from within each of the Focused Investment Areas (sections (C) Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, (D) A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce, and (E) Measuring Outcomes and Progress) that it believes will best prepare its Children with High Needs for kindergarten success.</p>	
<b>Comments on Absolute Priority</b>	
<p>Pennsylvania's vision is taking children, families, and communities to the top by ensuring all children, including those with high needs enter Kindergarten ready to succeed and to sustain achievement through the elementary grades. They have outlined three ambitious but achievable goals that build on their current financial and structural investments in its systems to ensure long-term success and sustainability. Its foundation in the development of strong standards, a well-established data systems and interagency partnerships as explained in the application ensure that the state has the capacity to implement the proposed reforms. The integration of the early learning standards into the K-12 standards framework will improve the consistency of educational expectations; a statewide strategy for family engagement will strengthen the capacity of communities to support their families; identifying the professional development needs of early childhood educators and providing appropriate training will improve outcomes for children; and developing a common outcomes reporting framework and data system at kindergarten entry will improve instruction.</p>	

